and retention were associated with the programs even after the effects of ACT scores, gender, and ethnicity were addressed.

Broader research has confirmed that involvement in extra-curricular activities and interaction with peers and faculty have a positive influence on retention, attainment of a bachelor's degree, and graduate school attendance (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Leadership development is also associated with activities such as tutoring other students, performing community service, and participating in campus demonstrations (Astin, 1993). Involvement in leadership development and extra-curricular activities also has the potential for future personal benefits for students— including improving self-confidence and interpersonal and leadership skills. Alumni report that the effects of this participation were also important to their job success, although not necessarily career mobility or earnings (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Students who experience leadership development through mentoring initiatives report greater satisfaction with their undergraduate experience, and LaVant, Anderson, and Tiggs (1997) found this to be especially true for minority students— African-American males, in particular.

Tinto (1985) reports that students who are involved in student activities are more likely to continue their education than their less-involved peers. He suggests that successful retention plans must pay attention to both the academic and social aspects of the student experience. Bedford and Durkee's (1989) review of research on the impact of orientation courses and student leadership programs on retention concluded that orientation courses were an important means of assisting new students with their adjustment to college. In addition, leadership development programs such as retreats and workshops and involvement in leadership roles within student organizations were seen as important factors in the retention of students and their social orientation to college and peers. Simply put, "encouraging participation and leadership in extracurricular activities helps students feel a part of the institution, develop friendships, and find their place on campus" (Bedford & Durkee, 1989, pp. 170-171). To the degree that students' participation in leadership training, education, and development helps them forge a connection with the campus and local communities, institutions benefit from including these activities as important core experiences for first-year students.

Models of Curricular and Co-Curricular Programs for First-Year Students

A number of colleges and universities provide excellent leadership development experiences targeted specifically to the unique needs of first-year students. Each of the programs described below represents a creative response to the desire to help students develop their leadership potential from the start of their college experience. The examples provided certainly are not an exhaustive list of programs but represent a diverse array of approaches to leadership development.

Leadership Camp and Leadership Safari, Central Michigan University

Even before students take their first class at Central Michigan University, they have an opportunity to involve themselves in leadership experiences that develop their skills and encourage growth. Leadership Camp takes place in mid-May, and two three-day sessions are conducted for approximately 80 incoming students who have accepted admission to the university but are still completing their high school careers. The itinerary for the program guides students through a series of experiences that reinforce the seven values of *The Social Change Model for Leadership Development* (Higher Education Research Institute, 1996): (a) consciousness of self, (b) commitment, (c) congruence, (d) common purpose, (e) collaboration,

"A number of colleges and universities provide excellent leadership development experiences targeted specifically to the unique needs of first-year students."

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(f) controversy with civility, and (g) citizenship. During the Leadership Camp, students explore these individual, group, and community values, and they are challenged to put their definition of citizenship into practice through a service-learning experience.

Leadership Safari, another program under the umbrella of the Central Michigan Leadership Institute, has grown from 65 participants in its inaugural year in 1997 to 950 participants in 2001. The program takes place just prior to the start of classes and targets first-year and transfer students, encouraging them to learn more about leadership and leadership opportunities at Central Michigan. Using a character development model, conference participants are assigned to small groups led by upperclass student leaders. These facilitators help students reflect on the experiences of the two main conference components: speakers and team activities. Topics covered in the program include ethical decision making, respect for diversity, caring for team members, and active involvement as a community member.

Students Taking Active Roles, Marquette University (WI)

Created in 1986, the Students Taking Active Roles (S.T.A.R.) program at Marquette University offers character development activities to new student leaders at the institution. Students apply to the program during their first two weeks on campus, and many are recommended for participation by upperclass orientation leaders and resident assistants, or by faculty and administrators. The program is intentionally small, involving only 80 students, in order to foster strong relationships that encourage a climate of growth and trust.

The experience begins with a weekend retreat, led by a team of diverse upperclass student leaders. The retreat introduces participants to the program and each other and orients them to the learning cycle of action and reflection used throughout the remainder of the semester. A series of bi-weekly seminars are led by upperclass student leaders and are sequenced to foster the development of character and leadership in participants. Seminar topics include empathy, diversity, leadership expressed in service to others, leadership styles, gender roles, and facilitating change efforts. The program challenges students to consider how the discussions they have with their peers will help them become more empathic student leaders when interacting with others. At the conclusion of the program, students reflect on how they might use what they have discovered about themselves to contribute to student organizations or campus leadership roles in offices such as residence life or new student orientation. Participants indicate that they feel more equipped to recognize social injustice or gaps in leadership within the Marquette or Milwaukee communities and communicate with peers, administrators, and faculty to initiate change. In the semester following the program, many S.T.A.R. participants continue the experience on their own by organizing a group service project and facilitating the sessions they have experienced for their peers on residence hall floors or in student groups.

Leadership, Excellence, and Community, Miami University (OH)

The Leadership, Excellence, and Community program was created in 1996 as a cooperative effort of the offices of Residence Life; New Student Programs; and Student Leadership, Campus and Community Life at Miami University. Developed to address a need for leadership education, the program is one of several theme learning communities offered at Miami for first-year students. The goal of the program is to help students develop their philosophy of leadership and understand how they can have an impact on the practice of leadership at any level of an organization. Participants enroll in a two-credit seminar on leadership and are involved in a variety of activities, including an opening convocation for the community, a campus-wide leadership conference, and service projects. The partnership used in the design of the program not only brings faculty and instructors into the residence halls, but also reinforces the concept that learning is everywhere and leadership is gained in a variety of settings and through diverse experiences.

In addition to an intentional integration of curricular and co-curricular experiences, the course is heavily dependent on technology, using online course materials, quizzes, discussion boards, and journals to supplement traditional classroom activities. With multiple sections of the course taught throughout the theme community, the technology also facilitates consistency of content across sections while allowing for instructor flexibility in the group process. Course content emphasizes historical approaches to leadership, student analysis of these approaches, and conceptualization of how both historical and emergent leadership perspectives are related to students' personal understandings of leadership. In an evaluation of the program conducted with student participants in 2000, students reported that although their ideas about leadership had not drastically changed, they had reinforced concepts such as "collaboration in leadership is paramount; leadership is not positionally defined; diverse perspectives must be encouraged; and the leader is an agent of change" (Roberts & Ahren, 2001, p. 42).

Residential Leadership Program, Nebraska Wesleyan University

Leadership development opportunities in most residential facilities are focused on resident assistants, hall council members, and residence hall association leadership. Beginning in 2000, Nebraska Wesleyan University modified a traditional community standards model, based on a developmental perspective of learning (King & Baxter Magolda, 1999), to provide all students in residence with the opportunity to learn individual and group skills of transformational leadership. The changes were made in response to the challenge facing many residence life professionals to develop programs for all students living in residential units, not just those serving on the staff or involved with the hall council. Nebraska Wesleyan also bases its model on the work of Astin and Astin (2000), who encourage the formation of "communities of reciprocal care and shared responsibility where every person matters and each person's welfare and dignity is respected and supported" (p. 11).

All residents receive "initial standards" during the first week of the academic year. These standards focus on basic tenants of safety and security for the floor. Within the first four weeks, floors use the initial standards and, as a community, establish a first set of their own standards. They must collaborate as a group to reach consensus in developing the community's standards (no voting is allowed). At the same time, individual living units establish roommate standards, which focus on self-knowledge, authenticity, empathy, and commitment to the created standards. All individual standards are given to peer assistants to review so that they are assured that each resident has a commitment to upholding the standards. If the peer assistant believes that the effort made on the roommate standards does not show commitment, then he or she works with each resident to explore his or her skill readiness for creating the agreement. During a conflict, peer assistants always use roommate standards as the basis for resolving the issue. Thus, the process models continuous learning. Because both floor standards and roommate standards are based on a process model of leadership, they change throughout the year. As issues arise on a floor, midterm exams approach, or standards are broken, residents revisit standards and make changes to accommodate new concerns. One student can call a meeting if he or she would like to revisit or propose modifications to standards.

An essential component of the program's success is the training of peer assistants. Experiential learning techniques are used with peer assistants; the process of developing individual and community standards for the hall is modeled in the creation of standards for the training experience. They also learn a set of skills called FLASH tools (Schultz, 2002) that encourage individuals and groups to approach disagreements with respect and empathy. The tools were initially established to teach confrontation skills relating to alcohol misuse and abuse and include five main concepts: (a) say what you see, (b) say how you feel, (c) say what you know, (d) set your boundaries, and (e) offer hope. The tools are modeled by the peer assistant staff and taught to residents through the development and revision of the standards.

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Evaluation of the residential climate has shown that the standards approach fosters responsible communities and helps residents and peer assistants learn more about the process of leadership and the skills needed for the development of transformational leadership.

Leadership Development Studies, Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society

Community colleges often enroll a broader student population than their traditional four-year counterparts, serving everyone from traditional-aged students studying full-time and preparing to transfer to four-year institutions to older students attending classes part-time for workforce retraining or career change. Traditional-aged students attending two-year colleges full-time often have greater opportunity than their peers at four-year institutions to become involved in significant leadership roles earlier in their educational careers. Shorter tenures for community college students, however, can create problems of continuity as organizations and programs transition between leadership teams. These factors combine to present a unique challenge for leadership training, education, and development programs for students in their first year at a two-year college. Many community colleges take advantage of the curriculum offered by the Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society of the Two-Year College to offer a course in leadership studies that encourages students to explore the concept of leadership, consider their own philosophy of leadership, and develop and improve their leadership skills. Eleven units with titles such as "Articulating a Vision," "Leading with Goals," "Empowering and Delegating," "Initiating Change," "Applying Ethics to Leadership," and "Leading by Serving" are designed to integrate contemporary and classic readings, films, and experiential learning to foster knowledge acquisition and skill development. To remain accessible to the broad audience that community colleges serve, the curriculum is interdisciplinary and centers on readings from the humanities.

In addition to the course curriculum, Phi Theta Kappa provides faculty certification seminars, a certificate of applied leadership program, newsletters, and other resources to support participating institutions. The resources are designed to disseminate lessons learned from implementation of the program at individual campuses. Strengths of the program include the well-developed curriculum and teaching documents and the administrative support provided by Phi Theta Kappa, including faculty and administrator professional development activities. Students are also happy with the program: "The majority of students have rated the course as useful and the transfer of concepts as substantial" (Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999, p. 50). More than 450 institutions nationwide have access to the Leadership Studies program of Phi Theta Kappa through the certification process.

Leadership, Ethics, Achievement and Development (LEAD), Sigma Nu Fraternity, Inc.

Greek organizations historically have provided opportunities for first-year students to connect to each other and their institution and to gain leadership experience. Many national fraternities have instituted leadership education programs for new members. One exemplary program is offered by the Sigma Nu Educational Foundation, which provides a means for individual chapters to engage members in a four-phase leadership program that "fosters ethical leadership and a high sense of achievement.... encouraging [members] to exemplify leadership in government, business, academia, and the community" (Sigma Nu Fraternity High Council, 2000, p. 3). As part of a broader movement by fraternities nationwide to improve operations and renew a commitment to founding values, individual Sigma Nu chapters have been encouraged to change the culture in their chapters since 1988. Beginning with new members, chapters can become more productive and members more confident and able to provide leadership in their chapters, campuses, and their future careers. New candidates participate in Phase I of the program, which is composed of 10 sessions devoted to traditional orientation education as well as communication and teamwork, project management, values, ethics, and an understanding of the differences between leadership and leading. Phase II and III continue members' individual

and group leadership development after they have become fully initiated members of the fraternity. During Phase IV of the program, upperclass members become facilitators of the program and are supported by an alumni consultant and the national headquarters. The program is funded through a campaign launched in 1988 by the national organization, and thus chapters require only time and dedication to implement a well-developed leadership education program that spans a collegian's four years.

A Process Model to Enhance Leadership Education and Development

Most post-secondary institutions offer opportunities for leadership training, education, and development for their students. In this respect, campuses can be viewed as "leadership laboratories" (Boatman, 1997), but not all students, particularly first-year students, have opportunities to participate. All campuses should provide a comprehensive approach to leadership development or education that takes root during the critical first year of a student's college career. An intentional approach to leadership education that fosters retention requires planning and analysis so that gaps in leadership education and development opportunities can be evaluated. We provide a model planning process that can be used in a community or higher education setting to encourage a more coordinated and collaborative approach to leadership education between student affairs and faculty educators. It evolved from an economic and community development approach to coordinating planning and development efforts in communities. The process model can help campuses enhance, redirect, or connect co-curricular and curricular efforts, creating a more seamless leadership education experience for all students. One of the authors has used the model in a variety of settings, including a comprehensive public university and two private liberal arts institutions.

Creating the Work Group

Selecting a diverse ensemble of stakeholders will ensure effective planning and implementation. This group should be committed to leadership, the planning process, and gaining institutional commitment to pursue opportunities that are uncovered. A typical work group would involve key faculty, administrators, and students who are engaged in the study or practice of leadership or in the education of leaders on campus. Faculty in social sciences, business, education, and communication often study and teach courses about leaders and leadership. These faculty, along with staff from campus activities, leadership programs, Greek life, orientation, and other student affairs educators, can form a team. A work group committed to reviewing leadership education for first-year students might also include admissions or enrollment management staff and faculty who teach first-year courses. Key to the success of the work group is a phenomenon Bennis and Biederman (1997) call "dual administration." Two individuals support the effectiveness of the group: a visionary leader or facilitator, who leads the group and believes in the planning process and its intended outcomes, and a key administrator, who will support, protect, and embrace the group's work in the overall institutional structure. This dual leader structure allows the group to be creative with few constraints and protects it from outside interference and politics.

Phase I: Aligning the Work Group

Once the group has formed, a series of questions must be addressed in order to align the members and clarify goals. First, the compelling reasons for developing, enhancing, or coordinating leadership efforts in the campus community must be ascertained. The group members must then determine what values will guide their planning process. They must identify what leadership education and development means or should look like at their institution. Using the answers to these

"Most post-secondary institutions offer opportunities for leadership training, education, and development for their students."

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questions, the alignment phase results in a statement of philosophy for the campus community about leadership development and education. Finally, the group must agree to a set of assumptions about leadership education that will drive the planning process and resulting program modifications. For example, some assumptions might be that leadership is a process; leadership opportunities are open to all students; a special emphasis should be placed on opportunities for first-year students; or the institution's mission will guide leadership training, education, and development.

Phase II: Assessment

The overall goal of Phase II of the planning process is for the group to discover their feelings about leadership, the current opportunities for leadership development and education, the climate for creating new initiatives, and the perceived need for an intentional leadership education emphasis on the campus. The activities in this phase focus on identifying the gap between the group's new philosophy and assumptions and the values, beliefs, and facts about leadership that exist in the campus climate and culture. Thus, bridging the gap becomes the work of the group and lays the foundation for what leadership development and educational opportunities might look like in the future. In this phase of planning, the work group must determine benchmarks or milestones that will guide the pace of the process. Group members must also explore both the facts and feelings about leadership in their current campus climate. Assessment strategies often include focus groups, surveys, faculty and staff discussions, as well as curricular and co-curricular audits. Once the assessment is complete, a gap analysis provides the group with an opportunity to stop the planning process or move forward. The outcome of this phase is the development of a mission, goals, and objectives that will guide the actual development of curricular and co-curricular programs. Siegel's chapter in this monograph provides a more in-depth treatment of assessment practice related to the first year of college.

Phase III: Development

The goal of the development phase is to close the gap between current leadership opportunities and the campus' desire to enhance existing programs or develop new initiatives. Setting long- and short-term goals that account for institutional budget cycles, external funding objectives, reorganization strategies, and curricular cycles helps to prioritize the opportunities that may emerge during the development phase. Modifications and new courses or programs are prioritized with funding and staffing needs in mind. Examples of short-term goals include the creation of a new co-curricular program, implementation of a change to an existing training activity, or revision of a course syllabus. Longer-term goals might include the development of new curricular programs, enhancement of leadership resources and libraries, reorganization of individual responsibilities or organizational systems, or solicitation of external funding sources for new initiatives. The outcome of the phase is to describe what current programs or courses can be enhanced and establish the priority for those goals.

Phase IV: Implementation

The results of the development phase are put into action during implementation. The focus of the work group's role now becomes monitoring the progress of the key stakeholders responsible for implementing the changes proposed by the group in the previous phase. Although the group does not disband, formal work is over until short- or long-term goals are completed and ready for evaluation. During this phase, the members of the work group may be involved in providing recommendations for components of pilot programs, reviewing a proposed curriculum, or assisting with training activities. The time required for implementation may vary from a semester to three years, but if the process has been well designed time is not wasted.

Phase V: Evaluation

The final formal stage of the planning process is evaluation. How and when evaluation occurs and the model used is determined by the strategies and solutions used by the work group in each of the previous phases. The following questions guide the evaluation work:

1. Have the short-term program goals been achieved?
2. Are the mission and objectives still relevant or do they require modification?
3. Have any changes in the institutional climate occurred that impact the program goals?
4. What has been the impact of new knowledge, actions, or attitudes about leadership on campus as a result of the implementation process?

Depending on the results of the first phase of evaluation and on the stability in the organization's climate, continued implementation would typically follow the results of a first evaluation. The length of time that has passed since the initial formation of the work group, the number and significance of changes in group membership, or shifting institutional priorities will all help determine the appropriate phase of the model that should follow evaluation. Major changes may require realignment and return to the first phase, while some evaluation results may call for further assessment or point to a need to simply re-tool the goals that were outlined in the development phase. If progress is positive, the group can seek institutional commitment to its ongoing work and continue its attention to leadership training, development, and education.

Barriers and Limitations of the Model

Although most institutions of higher education make it a goal to develop citizen leaders for the future, not all colleges and universities see it as a priority. During times of financial crisis, the landscape of higher education changes for many institutions. Some of the strongest institutions must refocus goals and plan for long-term fiscal health and stability, laying off staff and faculty, eliminating departments, or reorganizing to create leaner, more adaptive institutions. Unless leadership education is already woven into the fabric of an institution's culture, it may not be fiscally prudent to enhance and increase leadership training, education, and development activities on a campus that is trying to adapt to changing economic conditions and student demographics. In simple terms, timing is critical.

Other barriers can impede the success of even the best-developed and executed process model to enhance leadership education and development. One of the most devastating organizational barriers to the planning process is what is commonly referred to as the "silo mentality," either among colleges and departments who view their role as *the* leadership educators or between academic and student affairs divisions. An institution's "comfort factor" can also be a barrier to developing comprehensive leadership opportunities for all students. The fear of change in an uncertain climate can prevent the work group's recommendations from being instituted. Individuals must come to the process in an environment that embraces change, created by a community, not just *within* a community. Members of a planning group must feel free to redirect their energy and talent in order to realize a vision that is best for the community. Without an environment that supports collaborative change, the model will not be successful.

There is no substitute for good data on enrollment and retention when planning for leadership education and development. For example, if first-year students are not connecting to campus and retention numbers between the end of the first year and the beginning of the second indicate a pattern of poor retention, a strong justification can be made for a planning process that explores leadership education and development for first-year students. Without this data and other supporting evidence, assessment strategies critical to an effective gap analysis cannot be conducted.

Finally, because many higher education institutions are hierarchical, they operate in a manner that aligns leadership with positional power. Heifetz (1995) notes that we have always

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had a tendency to "equate leadership with authority," (p. 49) even though those in positions of authority may not be engaging in effective leadership. In organizations where the mode of operating is always "someone else is in charge of making those decisions," the process model described above has a formidable obstacle in creating a comprehensive model for leadership development and education.

If timing is right, assessment data is reliable and accessible, institutional leadership is effective, and a critical cadre of faculty, administrators, and students can be enlisted, then the planning model can serve as an important process for enhancing leadership training, education, and development.

Lessons Learned

All students, faculty, staff, and administrators in an educational community hold the responsibility of leadership education and development in their collective and individual hands. The imperative to grow a new generation of citizen leaders is everyone's responsibility. No group is more important than another, no individual more or less critical. If leadership education for students is not a community concern, then it will remain a single program or series of efforts that fail to encourage students to discover their capacity for leadership. Leadership programs, both curricular and co-curricular, are critical for first-year students. Many students entering higher education institutions today want to be involved in the campus community, but often require additional skills, education, or general knowledge to do so effectively. Leadership experiences during the first year will prepare students for deeper levels of involvement and provide a stronger connection to community, both of which will improve rates of student retention.

Research on the impact of involvement and leadership development on students and the example of model leadership development programs, as well as our own experience, suggest tremendous benefits to students, the institution, and the broader community when leadership training, education, and development programs are presented to students throughout their undergraduate career. Not only must the institutional community value and collectively engage students in leadership development, but it must also couple these values with a systems approach that explores retention and provides first-year opportunities for leadership development. Such an effort will yield the greatest results. Engaging the campus community in a process that explores both the current and potential impact of leadership training, education, and development programs and working collectively to address the gap between them will not only benefit individual students, but also potentially transform the institution and broader community.

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7

Providing Alternatives to Less Positive Activities: A Case Study of Changing Campus Culture

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Crisp, fall afternoons in a football stadium full of cheering fans, animated classroom debates, putting on the cap and gown after the last test is over and the final paper turned in—as administrators, we do our best to ensure our students enjoy a positive college experience in and out of the classroom.

But what about the less positive activities that are also often part of college life, all those things we don't mention in our view books or discuss on our campus tours? What about house parties and all-you-can-drink bar specials?

While it is not pleasant to consider the reality of this aspect of college life, especially the abuse of alcohol, ignoring it is not only foolish but also dangerous. By now the reality is, or should be, familiar to most college administrators. Several national studies confirm the problem of alcohol abuse at our schools, linking it to numerous negative outcomes including property damage, unprotected sex, assaults, injuries, and even death. (Abbey, 1991; Presley, Leichliter, & Meilman, 1999; Wechsler, Lee, Kuo, & Lee, 2000). Alcohol and drug abuse are linked to poor academic performance and are likely the reason that many students do not complete their education (Eigen, 1991). Moreover, campus alcohol abuse also often affects those who do not drink, as approximately 600,000 students are assaulted by a drinking student each year (Engs, Diebold, & Hansen, 1996).

As administrators at institutions of higher education, we must be concerned when the education we provide is compromised by students engaged in these less positive activities. Closing our eyes won't make these problems disappear and often makes them worse. In this chapter, we present a case study of West Virginia University, describing a campus culture that necessitated change and outlining a series of programs implemented on the campus over the last seven years to create that change and provide alternatives to less positive activities.

WVU's Approach: Creating Alternatives in Partnership with Students

WVU is a land-grant institution recognized by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching as a Doctoral/Research University-Extensive. WVU is also the state's comprehensive institution of higher education, with a College of Law and the complete suite of health science disciplines—medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, nursing, and physical and occupational therapy. As an institution, it is also a top-100 research university.

These parameters define the academic environment of the campus. Faculty are hired to pursue an aggressive research agenda, students are involved in research, and rigorous academic programs change continually to meet challenges of an ever increasing knowledge base.

But if the staff at WVU had any inclination to keep their heads in the sand and push on with the traditional way of doing business, that notion was quickly changed in the mid-90s. Enrollment had been dropping, and the school was facing a decline in the state high school population through 2011—this in a state that already had one of the lowest college-going rates in the nation.

At the same time, student behavior was deteriorating, and a party image was prevalent. Each year a back-to-school student block party, where thousands of young people would take to the streets to celebrate the first day of classes, was attracting revelers from far and wide. Throughout the years, as the tradition grew in popularity and attendance, so did the unruly behavior. In 1994 the block party spiraled out of control when two students were shot by non-students.

Football season each year brought its own worries. An unsanctioned student tailgating area became a mire of mud, fights, and assaults before each game. Numerous injuries and arrests occurred in the area during the 1996 season, culminating in a night game during which more than 75 people were taken to local emergency rooms. In the stadium itself, spectators sustained injuries from cups and bottles thrown by students and other fans. Not surprisingly, WVU received very negative press around the state and country.

As a capstone marker, the *Princeton Review* in 1997 bestowed upon WVU the title of number one party school in the nation. This led to another flood of negative publicity and caused both potential students and employers to shy away from the university. Parents and alumni were rightly concerned about campus safety and our image, respectively.

In spite of this, WVU's underlying academic foundation was still strong enough to continue producing well-educated students, some recognized as Rhodes Scholars, Goldwater Scholars, and Truman Scholars. The majority of the students went on to successful careers. However, that foundation was being severely tested, and it was clear that fundamental changes would have to be made, and soon.

Change is Needed

In 1995, as David C. Hardesty, Jr. prepared to assume the presidency of WVU, he took the advice offered to former Harvard president Derek Bok to heart, that the most creative ideas about the future of Harvard would come to Bok before he took office and got involved in his official duties as president of the institution. (Bok, 1986). Seeing the wisdom in those words, Hardesty carefully reviewed the situation at WVU after he was appointed president but before taking office. He identified several problems in addition to the party scene and the dropping enrollment, including a general lack of respect both to students and by students.

By the time he arrived on campus, Hardesty was prepared to address these issues. On his first day as president, July 5, 1995, he held a press conference and announced that West Virginia University was going to become a student-centered institution. A new vision statement confirming that commitment was established:

> West Virginia University is a student-centered learning community meeting the changing needs of West Virginia and the nation through teaching, research, service, and technology.

Realizing the immediate and imperative need to make the student-centered and service aspects of WVU's new vision a reality, President Hardesty created a Student Affairs Task Force, comprised of 20 representatives from the campus and community. This group evaluated and suggested improvements for all aspects of student life at WVU and in the surrounding community, including technology, administrative organization, quality-of-life, student services, class attendance, early intervention strategies, facilities, advising, and career development.

Several recommendations were implemented, the first being a restructuring of student affairs leadership, from an associate provost position to a vice president, whose primary role would be as an advocate for students. A retired major general and assistant judge advocate general of the U.S. Army was hired as vice president. This was a non-traditional choice for a student affairs leader, but he brought strong administrative, leadership, and management skills.

Together, the president, provost, and the new vice president for student affairs, along with many others from across the University, led a slow but steady redirection of the focus of West Virginia University. To implement a student-centered environment, we turned away from bureaucracy and red tape and toward student service and friendliness, away from top-down administration and toward collaboration with students and their families, away from the party image and toward a focus on learning.

These changes were promoted through various marketing efforts. Through brochures, viewbooks, ads, and recruitment literature, programs were featured individually and also as part of a collective suite of offerings from WVU. Both potential and current students and their families were targeted in an effort to increase enrollment and retention. The first-year orientation course was also used to introduce the changes taking place on campus. Student government became vocal, proactive supporters for the new programs. Students and parents were included on committees, ensuring that the foundation of these new programs would be student-centered.

Creating the Ultimate First-Year Experience

To provide a foundation for future academic and personal success for our students, we created what we believe is the ultimate first-year experience. A diverse series of programs and initiatives under the umbrella Operation Jump-Start provide a solid start for students. The focal point of this program was and is to personalize the first-year experience. We hoped this firm foundation would result in improved retention and an improved student experience. The goals established for Operation Jump-Start include

- Recruiting and retaining quality students and faculty
- Ensuring academic success
- Personalizing the first-year experience
- Changing the culture of residence halls and campus to a more student-centered, academic focus
- Providing opportunities for student-faculty involvement
- Encouraging healthy lifestyles
- Raising expectations
- Demonstrating that WVU is student-centered
- Developing residential learning communities

Residential learning is one of the cornerstones of the program. Developed in 1996, residential learning communities feature outstanding faculty mentors who live near each residence hall. Resident faculty leaders (RFLs) provide motivation and encouragement to students living in the residence halls, and help first-year students with the transition to college life, thereby creating a support system of Residential Education on WVU's campus.

Giving First-Year Students a Jump-Start

To further assist first-year students with the transition to college life, we developed a three-day orientation program called Jump-Start Academy that takes place the weekend before classes begin and in which the entire first-year class participates. Jump-Start Academy addresses many issues faced by students through a series of workshops and seminars. Students attend talks on campus safety; they learn about making safe choices regarding sex,

"To provide a foundation for future academic and personal success for our students, we created what we believe is the ultimate first-year experience."

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alcohol, drugs, and dating; and in small groups they meet with their individual RFL, resident hall coordinator, and resident assistants.

Jump-Start Academy is highly successful and not only gives students important information and advice, but also sets an important tone for the beginning of the semester. It culminates on Sunday afternoon with the New Student Convocation, during which the WVU administration, dressed in full academic regalia, join with local community leaders to welcome the students and provide encouragement for their academic careers.

Our efforts to support first-year students have continued to evolve through a partnership between student affairs and academic affairs.

Creating a Mandatory Orientation Course for All First-Year Students

The faculty senate approved a mandatory orientation course, University 101, as a one-credit, graded course, effective fall 2002 for all first-year students who are not enrolled in a major that already has an orientation course. To strengthen the sense of community, each class section is filled with students from the same residence hall, with the classes taught in the residence halls. Each residence hall hosts 9 to 10 sections of the orientation course.

An associate dean of student affairs and residential education and director of the RFLs re-wrote the syllabus and textbook for the course. Rather than using a generic textbook, he wrote a student workbook personalized to our campus that includes chapters on study skills, learning strategies, campus life, and resources at West Virginia University.

An important component of the University 101 course is the Jump-Start Programming Series, a faculty and staff lecture series that is implemented in each of our seven residence halls. This series includes five talks on health education topics and four academic and faculty topics. Students enrolled in University 101 are required to attend six of the talks offered in their own hall and to provide a brief written abstract.

Bringing Faculty and Education into the Residence Halls

Each year, faculty members are invited to the residence halls to give talks about their research or current events or social issues. They are also invited to have dinner with students before the program. Topics have included American society's fascination with the icon of the angel, censorship and the Internet, witchcraft trials in 17th century New England, triumphs and tribulations in African-American history, what killed the dinosaurs, terraforming Mars, and the possibility of life on Mars. In addition, professional staff members from University Health Services Center give talks on sexual assault prevention, alcohol awareness, stress and coping with college, and sexually transmitted diseases.

Students turn out in the hundreds to attend these talks. These programs break down the barriers that sometimes exist between first-year students and faculty and help the students become comfortable in approaching and talking to faculty.

Providing Academic Support in the Residence Halls

When the mid-term grades are released in the fall and spring semesters, RFLs meet with each student individually, discussing his or her academic performance and, if necessary, providing suggestions for getting focused and back on the right track. In these sessions, it sometimes emerges that the student is having a problem with a particular faculty member or course. In such cases, the RFL can speak to the professor on the student's behalf, serving as a true student advocate. These counseling sessions are highly successful. As an example, 75% of the students in Boreman Hall improved their grades to C or higher, and Boreman Hall went from the residence hall having the lowest GPA to having the highest GPA, second only to the honors hall.

Developing Study Skills

The Office of Residential Education has also developed a study skills course that is given in

the spring semester to all first-year students with a GPA under 1.0. This provides added support and encouragement to these students and helps them enter their sophomore year in better academic standing.

Fostering Supportive Relationships Between Students and Faculty

RFLs not only provide academic support, they also befriend the students, inviting them to their homes for ice-cream socials, dinners, and meetings. These social events provide an opportunity to find out how the students are adjusting to college, if they are feeling homesick, if they are finding any classes difficult, or if they have problems with residence hall life.

Promoting Cultural and Entertainment Events

In addition to on-campus activities, students also enjoy a wide variety of trips throughout the year. Some trips focus on cultural events (e.g., outings to the opera, ballet, and symphony in Pittsburgh); others are geared toward recreation and outdoor sports (e.g., trips to a nearby theme park, midnight ice-skating, white-water rafting), while others take students to nearby points of historic or cultural interest (e.g., a trip to the Frank Lloyd Wright house, Falling Water). All of these are very successful and the student participation is high.

Listening to the Customers

With the establishment of our new vision and the goals of Operation Jump-Start, a different climate on the campus of West Virginia University began to emerge. The attitude toward our students became one of providing exceptional customer service. As we evaluated our programs, we also began to change our approach. Instead of keeping students at a distance, we pulled them into every committee on campus.

We also involved their families through the newly established Mountaineer Parents Club, based on the successful model at Texas A&M and supported by President Hardesty's wife Susan Brown Hardesty. Today the club has nearly 11,000 members and provides an exceptional venue for communication and support. Out of the Parents Club came the establishment of a Parents Hotline for families with problems, which each year receives thousands of calls and provides just as many solutions.

Throughout all of this, we listened, and we learned, especially as related to those less-positive activities. Several of our students told us that they knew the risks they were taking by indulging in high-risk drinking at bars and house parties, but some continued such behavior because, quite simply, few, if any, alternative social activities were available on the weekends.

They explained that they celebrated before football games in a dangerous, unsanctioned area because no other location was available for them. They attended the block party because they wanted to see their old friends after a long summer and share the excitement of starting another school year.

Our students' families told us that they heard repeated complaints from their students that there was nothing to do on the weekends. Concerned parents related stories of parties and a bar scene too easily accessible to students and shared with us their worries over the atmosphere on campus.

Providing Choice: The Ultimate First-Year Experience Becomes the Ultimate Student Experience

We were determined to offer our students something they were obviously lacking: alternatives to less positive activities. It wasn't always easy, but students, faculty, administrators, and staff worked closely together to create a series of safe, enjoyable alternatives that were added under the umbrella of Operation Jump-Start. What began as the ultimate first-year experience has since grown into the ultimate student experience, and, we believe, has made WVU a national leader in successfully creating a culture of choice.

Back-to-school still brings a gathering of students, but instead of an unsanctioned block party, more than 15,000 students enjoy FallFest in our student union. This festival includes movie

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marathons, comedy performers, and musical bands on the student union plaza. The infamous Grant Avenue Block Party, and its inherent risks, has become nothing more than a memory.

Football Saturdays still find student fans tailgating and cheering on the Mountaineers before the game, but now it's in a safe, regulated area where they can enjoy free hotdogs and soft drinks and listen to a local band. Hundreds of gold shirts will be seen in the area, donned by members of the Mountaineer Maniacs, a sports booster club started by the students.

Weekends find our student union packed with thousands of students and guests, enjoying the free food and entertainment of the award-winning and internationally recognized weekend alternative program WVUp All Night. This program was one of the first major initiatives of the new vice president for student affairs. He established a committee chaired by his special assistant and within three months WVUp All Night was in full operation. Up All Night is held on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights and attracts 1,000 to 4,000 students to the student union. The wide variety of activities gives students a choice of going to the student union rather than staying in their rooms, going home, or going downtown to the bars.

The summer of 2001 brought the exciting opening of the student recreation center. Students have many choices at the recreation center, including swimming, climbing, jogging, lifting weights, playing basketball, and much more. Thousands of students take advantage of the center daily.

Operation Jump-Start isn't just for first-year students anymore—last year we implemented an enhanced senior year experience. A Senior Council, representing each of WVU's schools and colleges, guides decisions about senior fairs, celebrations, and assistance. This year, members of the senior council began making presentations to first-year students in University 101 courses on how to succeed in college.

Alcohol Abuse Education and Prevention

We have made a long-term commitment toward educating students about the use and abuse of alcohol and other drugs, adding to or strengthening our initiatives. Recognizing that the Greek system has a history of encouraging alcohol abuse, through our Parthenon 2000 program we are limiting the number of parties that fraternities may have and encouraging fraternities to move toward all-dry houses.

Education is an essential component in our efforts and is incorporated into the first-year orientation programs and courses, in residence hall programs, through information tables in the student union, and in more formal classroom settings. This education occurs among peers and with our on-staff alcohol educators.

Other initiatives focused on alcohol education and prevention are described below.

- The Department of Public Safety (DPS) routinely distributes and displays alcohol awareness brochures at various locations around campus and has a booth with an officer on hand to answer questions each semester at the Mountainlair (student union)
- DPS also speaks with students at orientation, advising them of the laws surrounding alcohol use. Students also learn that the crimes for which students are criminally prosecuted most often—date rape, battery, destruction of property—are crimes that typically involve alcohol use.
- The residence life staff receives training on alcohol issues and how to discuss this topic with students.
- University Health Services (UHS) cooperates with the Community Health Promotion (CHPR) program to offer special topics classes. One is "Drug and Alcohol Education for Student Athletes." A second UHS/CHPR class is a drug and alcohol course for student leaders that targets individuals in student organizations. UHS/CHPR also offers a Peer Education Program. Students receive education concerning drug and alcohol issues, particularly as they relate to issues of sexual assault, relationships, and STD and HIV prevention.
- All WVU local and national Greek chapters are required to hold programs edu-

cating members on alcohol and substance abuse.

- WVU's School of Medicine operates a web site developed to provide alcohol education for our students and the community.
- All fraternity and sorority pledges are required to take a pledge orientation class, which includes a mandatory alcohol education course. This is done in conjunction with University 101 and the Office of Residential Education.

WVU also provides alcohol/substance abuse treatment and interventions. Specific initiatives are described below.

- UHS has a Student Assistance Program (SAP) for assessment, treatment and referral of individuals with drug and alcohol problems.
- Students sent to Student Life who have on-campus alcohol violations are automatically referred to SAP. The SAP staff determines student treatment and education needs. Students involved in off-campus alcohol-related incidents are required to have a conference with the assistant dean of students. Referrals are made on an as-needed basis.
- The Carruth Center for Counseling and Psychological Services Center, part of student affairs, provides individual counseling—confidential, voluntary, and unlimited sessions with licensed psychologists. There is also a telephone hotline in service 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every day the University is in session.
- RAs, staff, or residence life administrators refer students to SAP and occasionally Alcoholics Anonymous. Also, our RFLs work closely with students to provide academic support and personal, alcohol, or drug-related help as needed.
- All WVU athletes sign a detailed "no-substance abuse" contract and are subject to random drug screening. They attend life skills courses and special classes on the dangers of substance abuse.
- DPS officers spot check ID cards at athletic or other events to deter underage consumption of alcohol.
- WVU sends a congratulatory letter to all students on their 21st birthday, offering them best wishes and tips for a safe celebration.

President Hardesty also reconstituted the WVU Advisory Council for Alcohol and Other Drugs. Chaired by the vice president for student affairs, the Council evaluates and supports efforts impacting the University community relative to alcohol and other drugs. The Council is made up mainly of representatives from the following units: student affairs, student government association, academic affairs, athletic department, communications, general counsel's office, office of social justice, parents club, human resources, and more.

In addition, we work with the state alcohol board and the local police concerning area bars and nightclubs, and were even successful in shutting one bar down for a period of time. Our commitment to student service and safety involves not only staff, faculty and administrators, but also parents through the Mountaineer Parents Club.

Results

If there is any doubt that President Hardesty meant what he said during the press conference on his first day as president about changing WVU's campus culture, the complete list of Operation Jump-Start programs listed in the appendix will put such doubts to rest.

"These efforts demonstrate what is possible when leadership is provided and a philosophy of collaboration is fostered throughout the organization."

These efforts demonstrate what is possible when leadership is provided and a philosophy of collaboration

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is fostered throughout the organization. The response has been overwhelming, as demonstrated by higher residence hall occupancy, fewer incidents of vandalism, and increased retention.

West Virginia University's efforts were validated by the Kellogg Commission's (1997) recommendations that all public institutions focus on becoming more student-centered. This report confirmed we were headed in the right direction and gave us renewed commitment to providing excellent service to our students.

Positive indicators give us additional confirmation that we are on the right path, as numbers from 2000-03 illustrate:

Enrollment

- 2002-03 overall and first-year enrollment numbers are the highest in the history of WVU.
- WVU's overall enrollment for fall 2001 was 22,774, the second largest total in our history.
- Average test scores and high school grade point average for first-time admitted residents are higher for fall 2002. The average ACT is 23.4 (compared with 22.6 in fall 2000), average SAT is 1098 (1070 in fall 2000), and average GPA is 3.55 (3.40 in fall 2000).
- Average test scores and high school grade point average for first-time admitted non-residents are higher for fall 2002. The average ACT is 21.6 (21.3 in fall 2000), average SAT is 1028 (1016 in fall 2000), and average GPA is 3.07 (2.96 in fall 2000).

Housing and Residential Education

- We were able to accommodate more than 500 students beyond housing capacity without a single complaint.
- Retention in the upper classes is the highest in recent history.
- Residence hall occupancy is the highest it has ever been.
- Vandalism expense is the lowest it has ever been.
- The number of incidents in the residence halls related to student conduct issues decreased by about 60%.
- Approximately 40% fewer first-year students were academically suspended.
- The number of students below a 2.0 GPA decreased by 4%.
- Student participation in programs and activities is quite amazing — each hall has an average attendance of 100 for each academic program, and students and RAs are reporting that the halls are much quieter and the students more focused.

Student Life Incidents

The number of incidents reported by Student Life has also dropped (Figure 1).

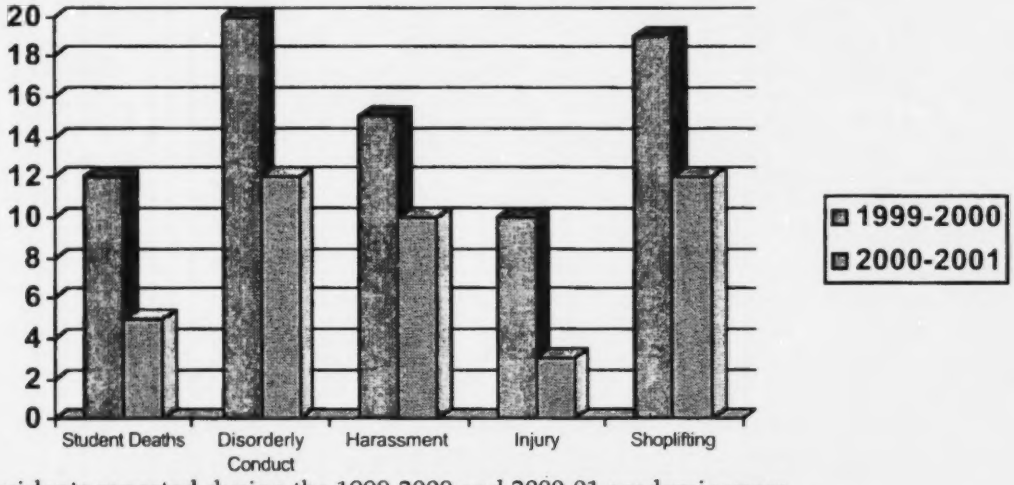

Figure 1. Incidents reported during the 1999-2000 and 2000-01 academic years.

Campus Incidents

Overall campus incidents declined markedly in the first fours years of Operation Jump-Start. Although the past two years show the total number of incident reports overall as slightly higher, the new numbers do indicate a reduction in the categories of larceny, simple assault, and arrests for drug law violation (See Table 1).

How Others Can Effect Change

West Virginia University is certainly not alone in providing alternatives to less positive activities. Colleges and universities nationwide have recognized that education is not enough. Students have told administrators that they understand how they can be harmed by abusing alcohol and drugs. However, they also tell us that when Saturday night rolls around, they want to be part of something. They want to belong. And if the only place to belong is at a house party or bar, then that is where they will go.

Recognizing the need to go beyond education, college and university administrators nationwide are providing viable entertainment alternatives for their students. In Ohio, for example, 79% of the colleges and universities in 1999-2000 were promoting non-alcoholic social, recreational, and extra-curricular and public service alternatives. (Mitchell, 2001)

More than 100 schools across the nation have contacted WVU for information on how to establish late night alternatives, and WVU administrators have presented information on providing alternative activities at several national and international conferences. WVUp All Night has been featured in the national and international press, including segments on ABC's *Good Morning America* and on a British Broadcasting Company radio program. The *NCADI (National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information) Reporter* and national honor society Golden Key's journal *Concepts*, along with many other magazines and newspapers, have also featured WVUp All Night.

WVUp All Night also received Innovative Program Awards from the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (Region II) and the West Virginia Association of Student Personnel Administrators, and was included in the 2000-01 *Promising Practices Sourcebook* and in the 1999-2000 *Templeton Guide to College and Character.*

It took an entire University community—administrators, faculty, staff, students, families, and members of the surrounding community—to implement a program such as Up All Night and to affect the many other positive changes at

Table 1
1996-2001 Safety Statistics from West Virginia University Department of Public Safety

Year	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Incidents of Larceny	306	273	232	212	244	211
Incidents of Simple Assault	44	37	32	14	29	22
Arrests for Drug Law Violations	62	43	38	46	48	38

Note. Provided by Lt. Randy Friend, WVU Department of Public Safety, April 2002

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West Virginia University. It has been a daunting, difficult, and at times overwhelming task, but it has also been greatly satisfying. As other colleges and universities strive to change the cultures of their campuses by providing alternative activities, we offer them the advice of WVU's President David C. Hardesty, Jr. Hardesty speaks from his position as campus CEO, but his advice is applicable to faculty, staff, and administrators at all levels.

When change is really required, announce your intentions. Boldness is rewarded. Timidity is not.

Look outward, listen to, and involve those you serve in the change process. Ask for feedback and involvement from the people that you serve, inside and outside the organization. They will tell you where the problems are, and as they gain confidence in the institution's responsiveness, the institution will reap rewards.

Make and document the case for change. A leader has to build a case when change is needed. This is time-consuming, but very important. It requires facts, data, and personal involvement. The chapter on assessment in this monograph offers suggestions on how you might begin.

Build, mold, balance, and nurture a strong change leadership team. The strengths of WVU's leadership team have been critical elements to our success in the last several years, sharing special talents for leading change, focusing on goals, and producing results in record time.

Persevere. Winston Churchill said, "Never, never, never, never, never give up." When you know you are on the right track, stay the course despite pressures to give up and leave the status quo in place.

Allow change to occur. It is important to work together with students, listening to and supporting their suggestions.

Communicate and celebrate successes. Leading change requires storytelling. Stories make the abstract more real and personal. It was important for us to identify the right problems and have strong internal and external mechanisms in place to communicate both problems and solutions. And, we provided constructive means for input along the way, and took time to celebrate successes.

Get lucky. Expect some bad breaks. Many events are beyond our control, so we must react as best we can. The designation as the "Number One Party School" was no doubt bad, casting a lot of negative publicity on the institution. But, on the other hand, the ranking helped underscore the case for change with greater urgency. Within a year, we were not on the top 10 list of party schools. But more importantly, the culture had turned the corner. In short, when making change, expect curve balls, relapses, and resistance.

Allow time for change to occur. We are not done at WVU. We do believe in ourselves and know that change on campus is possible. There are countless individuals who have contributed their time, energy, and ideas. Change takes that kind of input and help, and it takes time. Change is never easy. The truth is that there is a constant need for change on campuses. We must identify the areas where change is most needed and then provide a vision for how it can come about. (Hardesty, 2000)

Conclusion

We have offered the alternatives to less positive activities developed for WVU. Some are academic, but most are related to student life or are some merger of the two. In higher education, the focus is often on academic quality. But to achieve quality, there is a need for the academic community to focus on the status of student life, a focus somewhat foreign to faculty. To be a student-centered institution means meeting the personal needs of today's students. It is about taking steps to change the culture of the campus. We hope this case study identifies ideas for change and provides sufficient, positive outcomes to make the risks worth taking. For additional information, please visit West Virginia University's web site at www.wvu.edu.

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Appendix

Below is a complete list of specific initiatives that modify student behavior and provide alternatives, all of them new programs created under Operation Jump-Start to ensure students are and remain WVU's number one priority:

1995 — FALLFEST
This successful replacement of an off-campus, unsanctioned back-to-school block party attracts an average of 15,000 students each August, on the first night of fall semester classes, for a major outdoor concert, free movies, comedy clubs, and more. It's free!

1995 — MOUNTAINEER PARENTS CLUB
Nearly 11,000 families have joined 68 clubs across the state and nation to "stay connected" to and involved in their students' university experiences. A toll-free parent helpline is set up to provide hard-to-find answers to difficult questions.

1995 — NEW STUDENT CONVOCATION
Creates an immediate connection to the University experience for our new first-year and transfer students and their families.

1996 — RESIDENT FACULTY LEADERS
These faculty couples who live next door to the residence halls serve as mentors and friends, providing motivation and encouragement, and helping first-year students with the transition to college life.

1996 — FESTIVAL OF IDEAS
This program brings renowned speakers to campus each spring semester, raising awareness and challenging our understanding of relevant and exciting issues. In 2002, speakers included Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence*; Fareed Zakaria, author of the Newsweek article Why They Hate Us: The Roots of Islamic Rage and What We Can Do About It"; and Monster.com CEO Jeffrey Taylor. Spring 2001 featured Maya Angelou, Cornell West, and Jerry Greenfield of Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream.

1996 — SOPHOMORE LAUNCH
Held at the end of the first year, the Sophomore Launch is a celebration that acknowledges students' successes in their first year of college and encourages them for the future.

1996 — PARTHENON 2000
Through this program, WVU fraternities are committing to healthier lifestyles, including "dry" houses. Parthenon 2000 is tied in closely with a national movement among Greek organizations to choose substance-free living.

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1997 — THE NEW PIT
University leaders and students developed the "New Pit," a regulated tailgating area where students can tailgate on football game days in a safe, fun atmosphere. This replaced a potentially dangerous, unsupervised area.

1997 — CAREER SUCCESS ACADEMY
The Career Success Academy helps students establish successful, enjoyable careers by helping them choose a major, find summer jobs in their field, write resumes, and prepare for interviews and by providing guidance through the first two years of their jobs. It connects students to highly-successful University alumni.

1998 — ADVISORY COUNCIL ON ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS
This council addresses substance abuse problems and has the authority to make the changes necessary to help students stay healthy and make positive choices.

1998 — SAFETY TASK FORCE
This group of students, faculty, staff and city representatives was established to review safety issues on campus. As a result, improvements continue to be made in lighting, emergency phones, and pedestrian safety.

1998 — WVUP ALL NIGHT
Recognized on ABC's *Good Morning America* and the BBC, among others, this late night weekend activity in the student union (the Mountainlair) features study rooms with snacks, free food (including a midnight breakfast bar), movies, astro bowling and billiards, and major events such as dances and comedy clubs. There is little or no charge to the students.

1999 — NITE RIDER AND 2002 - CAMPUS PM
WVU Nite Rider was an experimental Thursday, Friday, and Saturday night transportation system for WVU students, providing one round trip per evening, per student and guest. It eventually evolved into Campus PM, a late night, weekend service provided by a joint effort of the University and the community's Mountain Line bus service.

1999 — MOUNTAINEER MANIACS
This athletic booster club was begun by students and continues to be student-run, with the support of Student Affairs and the Athletic Department. Hundreds of students have joined to cheer on the Mountaineers.

2000 — 21st BIRTHDAY LETTER
A card offering best wishes and tips for a safe celebration is sent to all students celebrating their 21st birthday.

2000 — SENIOR YEAR EXPERIENCE
A year-long series of celebrations and events, along with academic capstone courses, help our seniors prepare for the transition from college to career.

2001 — STUDENT RECREATION CENTER
The Student Recreation Center opened its doors in July 2001 and attracts thousands of students daily. The state of the art center features a climbing wall, weight and fitness centers, a recreational pool, a lap pool, running and walking tracks, basketball and other courts, a laundry, study lounges and more.

2002 — FACILITIES MASTER PLAN
A technology-based library opened in January 2002, and a new life sciences building opened in August 2002 for classes, further enhancing WVU's learning environment. A state-of-the-art Visitors Research Center also opened in 2002.

8

Assessment Strategies and Results

Michael J. Siegel
Policy Center on the First Year of College

Assessment has been a primary focus of higher education researchers, scholars, and practitioners for more than two decades. The assessment movement was prompted by a national call in the 1970s and 1980s for institutional accountability and confirmation that colleges and universities were meeting the needs of students and using resources effectively. In an era characterized by retrenchment, increased accountability to external publics, and growth in complex administrative structures and functions, the assessment enterprise has been fueled by a fundamental demand for educators to provide evidence of viability and ensure relevance of campus programs and services.

Nowhere has the application of assessment been more important than in the student affairs function in higher education. Traditionally, there has been much scrutiny by the higher education community of the relative value of campus social activities and other out-of-class experiences that are meant to support the academic mission of colleges and universities. Assessment has played a necessary and significant role in helping the profession document with empirical evidence the importance of the co-curriculum in helping students adjust to college as well as meet the academic demands of the curriculum.

This chapter will identify strategies for assessing campus activities and the co-curriculum in the first college year and make the case for an intentional commitment by colleges and universities to identify and use effective assessment strategies to improve campus activities. These characteristics will help practitioners identify assessment goals and initiatives that will aid in measuring outcomes, such as the impact of campus activities on first-year student satisfaction and retention. Campus activities and other co-curricular initiatives are critical components of the collegiate experience. Colleges and universities program and administer campus activities in large measure to facilitate the successful transition of first-year students into the campus environment and to provide a range of experiences that support, balance, and complement the academic endeavors of college students. Programming campus activities is a powerful way to transmit norms of behavior, values, rules, rituals, myths, stories, and other elements of campus culture to students.

At no time is the need for effective programming more evident than during the first year of college, the successful foundation of which has implications for the entire college experience. As Gardner, Siegel, and Cutright

(2001) point out, "The first months, weeks, and even days on campus are the time when students will make decisions about whether they seriously wish to pursue higher education and whether a particular college or university is the best place for them" (p. 3). The effective delivery of campus activities, programs, and services in the first year of college—and particularly in the first semester or term—is crucial to institutional efforts to improve satisfaction and retention among students. To determine whether or not campus activities positively impact satisfaction and retention, broad assessment is needed.

This chapter begins by making the case for an in-depth assessment of first-year students and activities. Next, it briefly examines research findings from a national survey on current practices in the co-curriculum. This section explores various first-year program areas, such as orientation and residence life, that have responsibility for planning and delivering initiatives for first-year students. These components of the college experience, which support the transition and socialization of first-year students into the campus environment, are key areas for targeted assessment of campus activities. Finally, strategies for effective assessment of campus activities are offered.

Making the Case for Assessment in the First-Year Co-Curriculum

In their seminal book on assessment for student affairs practitioners, Upcraft and Schuh (1996) suggest that assessment is a matter of survival for student affairs. With growing questions about accountability, higher education costs, student engagement, retention, and access, student affairs is at the center of the debate about whether or not colleges and universities are effective in their delivery of programs and services. While assessment in higher education has been, for many years, focused on learning outcomes and the impact of the curriculum on student learning and academic success, there has been a marked shift in the past decade toward assessment of student engagement and experiences outside the classroom. These co-curricular experiences are largely within the domain of student affairs, and further, within the domain of campus activities, the assessment of which is the focus of this chapter.

Assessment in the first year of college is increasingly targeted at the co-curriculum and focused on the academic and personal gains students make during college. Essentially, the purpose of this type of assessment has been to identify and document the extent to which various out-of-class experiences contribute to desired outcomes of college in the academic, personal, and social domains. Kuh and his colleagues elsewhere in this monograph define the co-curriculum broadly, suggesting that out-of-class experiences encompass the traditional co-curriculum—for example, leadership programs, student union work, and student government-which includes activities not traditionally linked to the classroom, and the non-traditional co-curriculum, which includes activities that occur outside the classroom but that may be linked to the classroom—for example, service-learning, on and off-campus internships, and campus honors programs. As they note, recent trends indicate that students are less involved in traditional forms of activity and are more involved in activities such as academic clubs, undergraduate research, on and off-campus work, service-learning, volunteer work, and other forms of community service.

Key to the proliferation of first-year assessment initiatives at many colleges and universities is the alarming national attrition rate of students from the first college year to the second. According to research conducted in 1997 by American College Testing (ACT), the national dropout rate from the first year to the second year was 47.4% for public, two-year institutions; 31.8% for private, two-year institutions; 32% for public, four-year institutions; and 29.9% for private, four-year institutions. To address the attrition issue, educators often turn to data that provide an indication of factors that predict student retention. Such factors include combined curricular and co-curricular initiatives, such as academic preparation of entering students, involvement in the academic and social life of the campus, faculty-to-student and student-to-student interaction, civic engagement, use of campus resources, participation in campus activities, and student engagement and motivation, among others.

Only with effective programming and planning is it possible to leverage campus activities to have an appreciable effect on the success and the satisfaction of first-year students. Just as planning and programming are vital to the dissemination of campus activities, assessment is the key component in determining how well campus activities, programs, and services are meeting their goals and performing successfully. In order to investigate the extent to which campus initiatives are effective, it is necessary to develop a campus-wide assessment plan structured around examining the desired outcomes and goals of activities planning.

First-year assessment is intended to lay the groundwork for continual institutional assessment that will be conducted throughout the remainder of the student experience. In addition, having data on first-year programs and services better positions institutions to develop longitudinal assessment initiatives and a more comprehensive picture of the student experience.

So where do practitioners turn for models of assessment to measure the impact of the cocurriculum on first-year students? To begin the process of developing goals and outcomes statements for assessment, practitioners will first want to consult current campus-based guidelines that outline the various goals and purposes of program areas. If none are available, or if existing guidelines are inadequate, assessment professionals can use as a benchmark established guidelines and standards that are published by professional higher education organizations. One of the most important and often-consulted set of standards is provided by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (1994). The Council, known as CAS, was established more than 20 years ago for the purpose of developing and promoting standards of professional practice in working with college students. The standards published by the organization are intended to guide higher education institutions and practitioners in both the delivery and assessment of multiple program areas found on college campuses. Focused on student leaning and personal development, particularly the field of student affairs, standards of practice are available for 28 functional areas. Included are standards and guidelines for each functional area along with a description of its historical evolution and contextual setting. The standards can be an invaluable tool for helping beginning assessment practitioners establish goals and benchmarks for the assessment process.

The Importance of Context in First-Year Assessment

Like all methods of evaluation in social science research, assessment in higher education is organized around a complex system of principles, guidelines, beliefs, and terms. For assessment to have meaning, practitioners must interpret the system contextually within the frame of their own world view. That is, assessment practitioners must necessarily operationalize assessment concepts based on local campus environments and cultures, and in short they must recalibrate global assessment concepts to meet the needs of their constituents at the campus level.

Many of the outcomes and goals with which campus practitioners are concerned in the first college year (e.g., retention, student engagement, success, satisfaction, cognitive learning, and civic engagement and humanitarianism) exist in the abstract as concepts derived from national data and trends and fashioned into theoretical frameworks. Operationalizing concepts so that they have local and campus-based meaning is vitally important if practitioners are to understand how outcomes impact their campus. So, for example, if measuring student engagement is the priority for first-year assessment, the following question should be asked: "What does it mean to be an engaged student specifically as it relates to this campus?"

"First-year assessment is intended to lay the groundwork for continual institutional assessment that will be conducted throughout the remainder of the student experience."

Though in large part similar, the assessment terms "objective" and "goal" more closely resemble flip sides of the same coin. In short, a goal, where assessment is concerned, is a broad and abstract

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term. An objective, on the other hand, is a concrete and narrowly defined concept, often stemming from larger goals. Goals are usually comprised of smaller, discrete objectives, but the reverse is not necessarily true. What assessment practitioners in the first year are ultimately striving for is the development of statements that are measurable, and measurement is most effectively conducted at the level of objectives rather than goals. While the terms are used somewhat interchangeably in this chapter, it should be noted that there is a distinguishable difference between the two.

Terms such as student success, student engagement, and retention only have meaning for us in the contextual sense, defined locally by each campus, because what constitutes success on one campus may not be so for another campus. Before any campus program, activity, or service is assessed, key questions must be asked that help institutions put goals and objectives into context. Chief among the questions a practitioner might ask are

1. What matters in the first college year on this campus in terms of programs and services?
2. Are certain co-curricular structures, programs, policies, and modes of delivery of student activities more desirable than others? Similarly, to whom would such programs be more desirable? And how will we find out?
3. To what resources, data, and assessment-related research do we turn for guidance in the development of assessment initiatives to address student needs in the co-curriculum?
4. Given the academic mission of our campus, the populations our institution serves, and the institutional culture, how do we define student learning, success, engagement, humanitarianism, and other outcomes of the student experience?
5. Are there beliefs and views about campus activities for which we have anecdotal evidence but little or no empirical evidence?

It is very important for practitioners to first consider the extent to which student activities promote and encourage gains in student learning outcomes, and then frame the above questions in terms of their centrality to the academic mission of the institution. Assessment in student affairs has largely been concerned with student satisfaction and engagement in activities outside of the classroom, and there is a growing demand for student affairs professionals to restructure out-of-class activities so that they have more relevance to the academic mission of the institution. This, of course, entails coming to some agreement on campus about what it means for an activity to be related to the academic mission. Even though student activities are not necessarily developed for, or intended to be part of, the curriculum, their centrality to the academic enterprise is becoming more apparent. And as such, they are increasingly being evaluated in terms of how effective they are in facilitating student learning outcomes.

The National Landscape of First-Year Co-Curricular Practices

To frame the context of assessment of first-year student activities, national data examining the extent to which student activities are prevalent on college campuses are explored. The most comprehensive picture of the programs and services available to first-year students outside the classroom is provided by the Policy Center on the First Year of College, a national-level center with a mission to improve the first year of college through research, dissemination, conferences, consultation, and most importantly, assessment.

Supported by grants from The Atlantic Philanthropies and The Pew Charitable Trusts, the Policy Center conducted a national survey, called the National Survey of First-Year Co-Curricular Practices, in the fall of 2000. The project marked the first and only descriptive research study in American higher education that aims to look broadly at first-year co-curricular activities. This section of the chapter highlights findings from the study, and in doing so provides a context in which assessment strategies and tech-

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niques for campus activities can be better understood and explored.

The National Survey of First-Year Co-Curricular Practices

The Policy Center on the First Year of College, with input from a nationally known team of educational research experts and first-year program directors, developed and administered the survey, asking a broad range of questions about several areas of student life including admissions, orientation, student activities, athletics, Greek life, and residence life. A web link to the survey, imbedded in an e-mail invitation, was sent to 621 randomly selected chief student affairs officers representing a wide range of two-year and four-year institutions. Of the 568 individuals who successfully received the e-mail message, responses were obtained from 291—an overall response rate of 51%.

The findings from the survey are not intended to be prescriptive, diagnostic, or evaluative. Nor are they meant to highlight "best practices" in the first-year co-curriculum. They are intended, rather, to paint a descriptive picture of current practices in specific program areas in the first year. That is, the survey is an attempt to capture a snapshot of the co-curricular landscape at U.S. colleges and universities. While some findings are consistent with anecdotal evidence about the first year, other data appear to be in conflict with widely held beliefs about what happens to first-year students outside of the classroom. Following is a brief summary of selected findings, with implications for assessment. To narrow the discussion, the examination will focus on key areas of campus life where student activities play an important role, and for which assessment should be a priority. These include orientation, residence life, and Greek life.

A major issue impacting evaluation of the co-curriculum is the challenge institutions face in bringing resources and personnel to bear on the assessment process and galvanizing support for assessment-related initiatives. The first question on the survey asked whether or not there is a single individual or unit responsible for first-year co-curricular programs on campus (no distinction was made between the individual and the unit in this question). The institutions most likely to assign responsibility for first-year co-curricular programs to a single individual or office are baccalaureate-liberal arts colleges, with 70% indicating this type of arrangement. Following liberal arts institutions were the research-extensive universities, with 57% reporting that responsibility for program delivery is assigned to one person or campus unit. In contrast, only one in three two-year and research-intensive universities reported this type of arrangement.

Respondents answering "yes" to this question provided a number of specific titles and office designations. Generally, the responsibility for first-year programs is assigned to a larger student affairs division or sub-unit, such as academic advising, student development, or campus activities; however, approximately 10% of respondents indicated the existence of separate first-year offices or individuals such as "Deans of Freshmen," "First-Year Experience Directors/Coordinators," and "Directors of Retention."

Orientation. New student orientation is a cornerstone of the first-year experience and a key time period for exposing students to campus activities and acquainting them with the culture of campus life. The survey asked several questions about the organization, delivery, and evaluation of campus orientation, and found that nearly all institutions offer some type of orientation to college, with general reporting lines to the vice president for student affairs. Findings indicate two-year institutions are more likely to schedule an orientation of half a day or less; research universities one and a half to two days, and baccalaureate colleges more than two days. In addition the survey found the majority of institutions do some type of regular evaluation of orientation. Both staff and students frequently evaluate orientation, but staff are somewhat more likely to conduct an evaluation of orientation than are students. What is suggested here is that evaluation and assessment be ongoing components of a comprehensive orientation evaluation plan, involving significant numbers of students as well as other members of the campus community.

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The degree to which an institution's orientation function is coupled with campus activities is largely a matter of institutional size and mission. Simply stated, co-curricular activities, and offices responsible for their coordination, are typically more tightly coupled at smaller institutions than at large institutions, where autonomous, yet related, units are likely to be more prevalent. One major issue that informs campus activities assessment relates to the content of orientation. That is, inquiry should be made into the types of activities first-year students are involved in during orientation, the relative value new students assign to orientation activities, and the degree to which orientation is social versus an introduction to the academic expectations of the college or university. In addition, campus activities and assessment professionals should use orientation to gather information about student expectations. Data can be compared later to actual experiences, providing an important snapshot of any discrepancies between college expectations and reality for first-year students.

An emerging trend in orientation is the inclusion of a greater number of academic activities. For both two-year and four-year institutions, the academic activities most likely to be included in orientation are small-group student and faculty sessions where academic programs are discussed. A large percentage of all institutional types report that faculty routinely meet with students during orientation. A smaller percentage of schools, however, indicate that faculty meet with family members or that faculty and students engage together in some type of service activities during orientation. As might be expected, such faculty and student service activities are most likely to occur during orientation at small, four-year, liberal arts institutions. Finally, four-year institutions are more likely than two-year institutions to offer special orientation sessions for student sub-populations, such as minority students, international students, and student athletes.

Residence Life. Residence life has been a vital part of the first-year experience throughout the history of American higher education. Campus residence halls have been one of the major vehicles for the delivery of first-year programs and services as well as the conduit through which social and co-curricular domains of student life have been given attention.

Residence life plays a significant role in the lives of first-year students, academically as well as socially. For many entering college students, the first year marks the first time they have lived either on their own or away from their parents. While the experience can be quite rewarding and liberating for some, it can be terrifying and confining for others. The residence life function is a primary vehicle for the socialization of first-year students and a catalyst for helping students make the transition from high school to college. For that reason, effective campus activities programming related to the living and learning experience is crucial.

Linking special academic programs, such as learning communities and first-year seminars, and offering special academic services or programs such as honors programs, housing separated by major, foreign language, or international status, and tutoring or academic advising is undertaken by only a small percentage (approximately 30%) of American colleges and universities. In general, larger institutions are more likely than smaller institutions to design residential linkages

In terms of residence life and the assessment process, the survey asked respondents whether or not their institution had assessed particular residential life outcomes, specifically student satisfaction; residential versus non-residential retention rates; residential versus non-residential academic performance; residential versus non-residential social/personal development; and residential versus non-residential student involvement. Among the six variables, institutions in the aggregate were most likely to evaluate student satisfaction and its relationship to residence life—just over 85% of respondents reported evaluation of satisfaction. Within that percentage, master's institutions were most likely to conduct residential student satisfaction assessment. The second most commonly evaluated outcome was student retention. Approximately 40% of institutions evaluate retention as a function of residence life, and within that group, master's institutions again are more

likely than other institutional types to conduct this type of assessment. Among the key findings that have implications for first-year campus activities and assessment are the following:

1. Residence halls that have restricted, or designated, first-year floors or wings are most likely to be found at the small, four-year, liberal arts institutions.
2. Although two-year campuses are less likely to have residence halls, approximately 20% of the two-year respondents do house some students on campus.
3. Residence life is linked to academic programs and structures in different ways. Less than one fourth of residential institutions offer residential learning communities, and just under one third link residence life with first-year seminars. Approximately one fourth have some honors housing, and approximately one of every three offers tutoring or academic advising in the residence hall.
4. Overall, the most common type of faculty involvement in residence life is faculty presentations in residence halls.

Greek Life. Thirty-two percent of the institutions represented in the study—all of them four-year schools—sponsor Greek social organizations that first-year students may join. But overall the percentage of first-year students who join Greek organizations is low. Approximately 60% of respondents indicated that no more than 10% of first-year students join Greek letter organizations.

Although Greek life affects only a fraction of the nation's first-year students, the impact it has on both the students and the larger college community is often dramatic. While philanthropy and service have largely been positive aspects of the Greek experience, other characteristics of Greek life have been more deleterious to the value of campus life. Nearly one third of respondents indicated that hazing had occurred on their campus during the past two years involving first-year Greek students: The process of rush can also be very disruptive to new students, academically as well as socially, and devastating to students who do not receive a "bid" from their preferred fraternity or sorority. The potential for disruption is even greater when rush occurs during the first few weeks of the college experience, a time when new students are typically overwhelmed by multiple demands for their attention. In a more encouraging vein, research in the higher education literature has found that Greek affiliation is positively correlated with student retention and institutional satisfaction. The central issue for campuses to consider is whether Greek life supports or is a deterrent to the academic mission of an institution and whether the institution is able to effectively monitor and control the activities occurring within, and sponsored by, these organizations.

In sum, opportunities abound for first-year student involvement at all colleges and universities, regardless of size and function. Yet, first-year students are more likely to encounter specialized first-year activities—especially leadership and student government activities—at large research universities than at other types of institutions. That is, there is likely to be a greater proliferation of student activities designed for, and by, targeted groups of students at research universities than at smaller schools, given the diverse numbers and needs of students in attendance. Whether the scenario is problematic or fortuitous for assessment is largely contextual. There may be a greater abundance of assessment opportunities in more areas of campus life, but defining problems and developing a manageable and sensible assessment plan may be overwhelming.

"In sum, opportunities abound for first-year student involvement at all colleges and universities, regardless of size and function."

The three areas discussed above, while considered key springboards to further involvement in the life of the campus, represent only a fraction of the campus activities in which students have the opportunity to participate during their first year of college. Other areas of campus life that might be the focus of assessment

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include, among other things, honor societies and ethnic and cultural centers; academic-based groups such as environmental clubs, science organizations, and language clubs; and a mix of other activities such as student-run businesses, performing arts groups, political organizations, recreation groups, service organizations, religious clubs, and club sports teams.

Nine Principles of Effective Assessment

After targeting areas of campus life for evaluation, how shall assessment be conducted and what principles should guide the process? To frame the discussion of student activities assessment in the first college year, some basic fundamentals and principles of assessment will be highlighted. One set of principles, developed by practitioners (Astin et al., 1992) invited to a meeting of the American Association for Higher Education Assessment Forum, serves as a benchmark in the field of higher education. The statements are widely accepted as principles of good practice in assessment. The principles, originally designed to address student learning related to the curriculum, have broad applicability and can be used to inform campus activities assessment.

1. The assessment of student learning begins with educational values.
2. Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time.
3. Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes.
4. Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.
5. Assessment works best when it is ongoing not episodic.
6. Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved.
7. Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about.
8. Assessment is most likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.
9. Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public.

Effective assessment is not simply the strategic selection of instruments, surveys, questionnaires, or qualitative methodologies for the purposes of evaluation or program review, although such an endeavor is certainly an important part of the assessment process. Nor is assessment the write-up of progress reports, the conducting of research, or the simple documentation of statements, goals, and objectives about the delivery of campus programs and services. Assessment is most effective when it is a comprehensive or systematic combination of the two.

The Nine Principles Applied to the First-Year Co-Curriculum: Steps and Strategies

Central to the implementation of a campus assessment plan is the development of key statements of needs, goals, and aspirations. Assessment starts with an organizing set of principles and procedures, and practitioners should avoid "putting the cart before the horse," or selecting instruments and tools for assessment before doing a needs analysis and establishing goals. Before surveys can be administered and assessment methodologies employed, questions about the nature of what is to be studied, by whom, and for what purposes must be asked. Drawing on the work of Banta, Lund, Black, and Oblander (1996) and Upcraft and Schuh (1996), the following section outlines a series of nine strategies for conducting effective assessment of campus activities. What is offered in this section is a reframing of the above nine principles of effective assessment from the standpoint of the co-curriculum. That is, each of the principles will be restated in co-curricular terms, and the result will be a series of strategies and steps that will be useful as a guide for conducting assessment initiatives related to student activities in the first year of college.

Strategy 1: Define the purpose of campus activities assessment using clear and well-defined goals statements.

An institution or campus unit undertaking assessment of campus activities must first address a series of important questions, the purpose of which is to derive explicitly stated outcomes that will ultimately guide the assessment process. All assessment should start with this question in mind: "What is the basic purpose of conducting assessment?" From that answer all the other details of an assessment plan flow. Is the purpose to challenge widely held beliefs about student participation in, and satisfaction with, campus activities? Is the purpose to make the case for an investment of resources into new campus programs or activities, or to justify the continual existence of current programs or activities? Is there a concern that the institution is not doing enough to promote student involvement in the co-curriculum and is, therefore, in need of assessment data to find out what might attenuate the problem?

The answers that follow from the questions above must be informed by explicitly stated goals and outcomes. Whether it is the goal of an activities director to increase minority student participation in student leadership programs or examine the impact of Greek organization on first-year academic experiences, the foundation of assessment rests on developing clear objectives that are realistic, measurable, and appropriate for the application of any clearly defined assessment plan.

Strategy 2: Identify the problem areas or concerns on campus that need to be addressed by assessment.

A major step toward defining assessment goals is performing a needs analysis of the problem areas or concerns to be addressed. There are many goals of a needs assessment, the most important of which is to identify structures, programs, or activities on campus that need improvement or alteration in some way. Practitioners should keep in mind that not everything on campus can, or should, be fixed, improved, restructured, or changed in some way. It is therefore important to identify problems for which there is a significant amount of interest in addressing on campus, and for which assessment is likely to yield results that can be leveraged for change.

Within reason, institutions ultimately want to meet the needs of students. To understand student needs, it is necessary to identify patterns of student use of resources and facilities and their participation in campus activities. It should be noted, however, that mere use of facilities and participation in activities, services, and programs is not sufficient as an indicator of problem areas or concerns. Identifying problems must, therefore, include a combination of student participation and use of services, staff and administrator perceptions about student behavior, and institutional data collected on student needs. For instance, one such problem that assessment can help answer is the difference between perceived and actual barriers to student participation in campus activities or use of campus resources.

Strategy 3: Outline and document, using a data-audit process, what is already known about first-year students and the activities in which they engage.

The Policy Center on the First Year of College, in collaboration with the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) conducted during the 2001-02 academic year a pilot study of what is called the Data Audit and Analysis Project. An assessment tool called *The Data Audit Toolkit* (NCHEMS, 2002) was developed during the pilot study, and participating institutions were instructed to inventory current databases on campus that might contain data relevant to first-year student behaviors and attitudes as the first step in the delivery of assessment initiatives. The same principles are encouraged here for student activities practitioners.

The basic premise of a data audit is that institutions must find out what data they already possess before they seek more and other types. Taking an inventory of current assessment data on entering students will help institutions generate a

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picture of what is currently known about first-year students. In addition, it will help practitioners avoid duplication of efforts in data collection, which is typically a drain on resources. Institutions invariably want to develop a comprehensive understanding of their first-year students so that they can more effectively organize programming and activities around student needs. The data audit is a powerful mechanism for helping institutions understand more holistically the experiences of first-year students, and ultimately match student needs more effectively with institutional resources.

Whether an institution is conducting a self-study, gathering data and information for accreditation purposes, or embarking on a new assessment program for the first year of college, the data audit offers an intentional means by which institutions can locate and document existing data sources on campus, with the ultimate goal of improving the structure and flow of data.

Strategy 4: Determine what population, or which campus activities, will be targeted for assessment.

This strategy underscores the importance of focused assessment, or directing assessment measures at specific populations of program areas. A crucial element of the decision-making process is the development of a decision tree that ranks from highest to lowest priority those elements to be addressed. For instance, practitioners can start by making a list of possible assessment activities in the first year, which might include measuring student satisfaction with orientation, student use of campus resources and facilities, the impact of residence hall programs on student learning, or the use of student leadership programs by minority and international students, among others. Taking into consideration human and financial resources, as well as the priorities of those involved in the assessment process, practitioners will have to determine what can and should be assessed, and to what extent. It will be to the benefit of any student activities assessment plan to maximize what are likely to be limited available resources, so the streamlining of efforts to develop tightly defined and targeted projects will be of utmost importance.

While practitioners and interested constituent groups might consider broad assessment ideal, it may not be possible or even practical to assess all students who participate in or experience a particular program, activity, or intervention. This, of course, largely depends on the size of the institution or unit, as well as the scope of the assessment initiative and the attendant methodology. It must, therefore, be determined which individuals or groups of students will be assigned to which assessment interventions. If, for instance, one would like to measure student perceptions about the extent to which residence halls support and promote academic integration into the institution, he or she will need to determine whether it is necessary to survey all first-year students living in residence halls or whether it is more feasible to compare selected academic living and learning communities with floors or halls that are not organized around any particular theme.

Strategy 5: Identify individuals or groups that will be involved in the assessment process, from data collection to analysis.

It is important to determine which individuals or constituency groups on campus will take part in the assessment process, and whether their involvement is more appropriate to the development of the assessment plan, the actual administration of surveys and collection of data, or data analysis. If a student affairs professional is interested in learning about the level of engagement of first-year students in various orientation activities, then determining who will need to be involved in the data collection process and how many individuals will be needed to undertake the task is central to planning. In addition, decisions must be made about who will be responsible for analyzing the data and where the data will be stored. The scope of any assessment initiative will have ramifications for which groups or individuals will be involved in the assessment process.

The key factor in determining which individuals will be involved in the assessment process is the selection of the methodology, or methodologies, that will be used to gather student data. The assignment of individuals to conduct

assessment and the selection of the methodology by which assessment will be conducted may occur concomitantly, as the selection of one is likely to be dependent on the selection of the other.

Strategy 6: Determine the most suitable and effective methodology(ies) for conducting assessment, given the contextual nature of activities targeted for assessment.

Given decisions about the purpose of assessment initiatives and the problems or concerns that need to be addressed by the institution, how will data be collected? Plans for institutional assessment should include selecting among a variety of evaluative methods, modes of inquiry, and processes for undertaking data collection. Selecting from among multiple methods is important in that it gives practitioners broad insight into the student experience and provides a comprehensive picture of behavior that is based on statistical data as well as qualitative information. The process of using more than one method to gather data is called "triangulation," and it provides a richer and more in-depth analysis of student use of campus resources and involvement in campus activities.

Typically, assessment methodology falls into one of two major social science traditions—quantitative and qualitative. Under the rubric of qualitative methodology, researchers study phenomena as they occur and exist in a natural state within a particular environment, ideally free of external manipulation. Theoretically, data collection and analysis are guided by an inductive process, whereby assessment questions are posed, data about people and programs are gathered, and themes are developed based on information that is collected. In contrast, quantitative methodology is guided by a deductive process, whereby theoretical assumptions, developed prior to data gathering, are tested using an assessment or evaluation tool (Patton, 2002). In terms of selection, you will have the option of choosing one or the other, or a combination of the two methodologies. You might decide to apply separate methodologies to different assessment initiatives or you may apply a combination of methodologies within the same initiative, which I refer to as a "hybrid study" (e.g., a survey administration followed up with focus group interviews related to the study or concerned with the same topic).

Strategy 7: Determine how data are to be collected and analyzed, and identify a central storehouse or collection point where data will be housed.

Once the methodological modes of inquiry are selected for the data collection process, the nature by which they will employed must then be addressed. If a qualitative design is a preferred approach, what types of qualitative questions will be asked of student participants and what type of interviews or focus groups will be conducted? Will a case study approach be desired, whereby the experiences of a small number of individuals are examined and analyzed? If a quantitative design is used, what survey instruments or questionnaires will be used and how will they be administered? Will the institution use national-level instruments or locally developed assessment tools? And if a combination of approaches are used in the assessment process, how much attention will be given to each and who will be responsible for conducting the various assessment interventions. Finally, who, or what office, will be responsible for serving as the storehouse for the data, and in what format will it be kept?

These and other questions address the data collection and storage component of assessment, and they must be answered in an effort to determine the parameters of the data collection process and to ascertain the manageability of the overall assessment initiative. Student affairs and student activities practitioners will want to consider the extent to which the data collected will be integrated with other campus databases and coded so that retrieval of records and data analysis can be effectively undertaken. (The data audit process

"Typically, assessment methodology falls into one of two major social science traditions—quantitative and qualitative."

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outlined in Strategy #3 is designed to assist practitioners in this endeavor).

Strategy 8: Determine how information from data analyses will be disseminated.

Once data are gathered and an alyses are performed, how will the assessment findings be documented and shared within the institutional community? In other words, what is the best strategy for the dissemination of findings and results from the assessment initiatives that are undertaken? Certain individuals (i.e., directors of programs and other mid-level unit directors on campus) might be concerned with the two or three most salient and important findings related to their programming needs. Other individuals—perhaps the president and other senior administrators—might not want or need access to lengthy reports or tables of information and will instead require an executive summary briefly outlining major findings. Still others who might have either a greater capacity or interest in data (e.g., institutional researchers or assessment directors) might want to read full reports or perhaps have access to raw data and databases. And what about reporting to constituents external to the college or university? If institutions want to share information and findings with parents, members of the press or other media entities, or community organizations, reporting structures and formats must be tailored accordingly.

Strategy 9: Identify ways in which assessment findings can be used to leverage change on campus.

Ultimately, the end game of assessment is change. Whether findings reaffirm empirically what has always been assumed on campus anecdotally or whether they reveal fundamental weaknesses in the most esteemed and prized campus programs or activities, assessment is typically organized to leverage change in some way. Institutions undertake assessment because they want to be more informed in making decisions about whether, and to what extent, changes need to be made to their programs, policies, and services. Campus activities assessment should follow the same principle.

To identify ways to leverage change on campus, institutions must revisit their purposes for conducting activities and determine how the findings can be used to frame solutions to identified problems. Typical questions might include

1. What types of changes are we willing to make, even if drastic, in our unit or area if the findings yield unfavorable information?
2. What are explicit steps that we need to take to move from findings to action?
3. What individuals or constituent groups on campus were interested in the findings in the first place and would want to know outcomes of the assessment?
4. Which key faculty will we need to enlist in the change process so that we maximize the academic merit of our programs and services?
5. What are some ways in which we can collaborate with other departments to ensure broad investment in the change process?

In sum, reporting results and findings is only the first step in the change process. Indeed, having results but no particular outlet to make them known or to be used in some way is not an efficient use of campus data. Practitioners must develop useful methods of both reporting data and ensuring its use in the change process.

Conclusion

The degree to which students are successful in making the transition from high school to college will in large measure influence whether they are successful in making the subsequent transition from the first year of college to the second year. To be sure, the first days, weeks, and months of the first year of college are critical, for it is a time when students begin to develop behaviors, attitudes, and opinions about college that will likely be sustained throughout the entire collegiate experience. At the individual level, student success is a function of several interrelated components, including academic preparation, social adjustment, and cognitive

maturity. At the institutional level, student success is largely a function of the effective delivery of campus academic programs, student support services, and campus activities, among others.

The co-curriculum plays a vital role in the success of college students throughout their entire collegiate experience, but has its maximum potential impact during the first college year. The degree to which institutions take responsibility for assuring that co-curricular initiatives intentionally support student learning and socialization affects the impact of these initiatives on student success. And the degree to which co-curricular initiatives support the academic mission of a campus will directly impact the likelihood that co-curricular units will be supported and perceived essential to the overall success of students.

Generally, first-year programs are one of a number of responsibilities given to student affairs divisions, and resources are often limited. In addition, many assessment pursuits in the first year are marked by a failure to develop a coherent set of goals and strategies, which often results in duplication of efforts, confusion over administrative responsibilities, and wasted resources. Although there is no one best way to assess first-year campus activities, the most important aspect to consider is the relationship campus activities have to the academic mission of the institution. Documenting the centrality of the academic mission in the programming and delivery of campus activities will be a significant undertaking for student affairs and campus activities assessment practitioners in the future.

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9

Connecting Academic and Student Affairs: A Synthesis for Engaged Learning and Retention

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As the new millennium unfolds, the pressures on first-year undergraduate students and higher education institutions that must attract and retain them continue to mount. High school populations and graduation rates are steadily rising, thus potentially augmenting the numbers of all types of students eligible for college, including minorities and females. With this possible increase in the number and variety of college students, the competition for admission to four-year institutions-particularly those with strong reputations-intensifies. Prospective students are keenly aware that the better the college degree, the greater the earning capacity of the graduate. The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that over a working lifetime, a college graduate with a bachelor's degree will earn $600,000 more than a high school graduate. An advanced degree will bring $800,000 more, while a professional graduate degree in medicine, law, or business will result in an additional $1.3 million (Greene, 1998). Degrees from the most reputable institutions yield even greater results.

To attract a large pool of qualified applicants, universities and colleges fiercely compete for top spots in U.S. News & World Report's annual college rankings. Even a minor jump in this ranking can boost a school's applicant pool sharply. Such a competitive and hierarchical educational system mirrors the economic marketplace, in which "small differences in performance (or even small differences in the credentials used to predict performance) translate into extremely large differences in reward" (Frank, 2001, p. 5). Participants in this winner-take-all market face strong incentives to invest in performance improvement, thereby increasing their chances of coming out on the winning side. Consequently, universities are spending more and more to recruit and retain the best first-year students, and tuition costs soar.

Higher tuition rates as well as our winner-take-all society put greater stress on entering college students who are concerned about their ability to pay for college and to secure a return on their investment. Thus, rather than being concerned with developing a philosophy of life or political or civic awareness, the first-year students of the new millennium not only experience more depression and anxiety and place more emphasis on securing good grades than in past decades, but they also are more committed to materialistic values (Astin, 1998). As a result, they seek technical, scientific, and literate knowledge and leadership skills required to excel in an increasingly global and insecure

economy (Cooperative Institutional Research Program, 2001). As noted in Chapter 8 of this monograph, the insistence on a monetary return for attending college has also filtered into the legislature and general public, who more than ever are demanding that institutions of higher learning prove academic excellence and a high-quality education in the face of more rigorous accreditation criteria and procedures, and increased regulation.

Equally dramatic as the evolution of the concerns and attitude of entering students is the change in the role of the faculty. Beyond performing the traditional functions of teaching, research, and service, faculty must increasingly augment their contact with students as mentors outside the classroom, demonstrate new competencies in technology, attract external funds for research and teaching, serve as liaisons for alumni fundraising, engage in cross-disciplinary endeavors, and infuse their research and teaching with real-world applications-all within universities whose numbers of full-time faculty have been diminishing in recent years (Rhoades, 2000).

As the 21st century advances, colleges and universities interested in improving the experience of their first-year students face a host of challenges and changes: increased competition for a diverse student body, highly organized and career-minded first-year students, a more technologically and socially complex global environment, a faculty with tremendous demands on its time, and a skeptical public concerned with rising tuition costs. The chapters in this book suggest that there is no shortage of thoughtful and ingenious ideas for how to address many of the issues that face educators wanting to improve the experiences and profile of entering students. The challenge is not identifying solutions; rather, the difficulty lies in choosing the best option. In other words, rarely do educators lack ideas, they lack the ability to discern which ideas would be most useful within their context and how to effect lasting and purposeful change. The final chapter proposes a process for generating a unique vision for a campus-wide, first-year experience by referencing some of the dominant themes and points from the preceding chapters. We used this process in our own work, and we provide the outcome as an example of a comprehensive strategy. Any strategy that is likely to be effective must be informed by the best traditions and theories across the nation and suited to the unique needs and purposes of your campus community. Moreover, whereas separate individual campus activities programs for first-year students can and do help to address many of the myriad problems listed above, a more systemic and lasting impact on recruiting and retaining first-year students can be made when the entire campus-faculty, staff, administrators, and students-collectively come to the same understanding of what the first-year experience should be on their campus and create a coherent set of programs that reinforce that shared vision.

A Process for Change

The process of changing a university's focus to first-year students' experiences is complex and idiosyncratic. Experience suggests that effective change does not happen when an institution merely copies the programming and plans of another institution. Nor does it happen when an institution takes a band-aid approach and tries to initiate one new program to address a complicated and interrelated set of problems or when an institution creates an ambitiously long laundry list of ideas that may look impressive in a report but are never fully implemented. Although change is often driven by external factors (e.g., low yield for high-ability and multicultural students, poor retention rate for first-year students, or a perceived slipping of academic standards), significant change can only happen internally-that is, when the members of the community are willing to accept mutual responsibility to re-envision the way they perceive the first-year experience and their role and relationships within it. This point is accentuated in *Leadership Reconsidered: Engaging Higher Education in Social Change* (Astin & Astin, 2000) in which the authors argue that if vitality in learning is to be achieved, fundamental questions relating to mutual responsibility must be addressed:

- What has to be changed about the nature of teaching?
- What must faculty do?
- What must students do?
- What must student affairs staff do?

In essence, *Leadership Reconsidered* proposes that fundamental and transformative change entails a wholesale cultural shift in which key stakeholders come together to rethink the way they see themselves, the way they see others, and the way they relate to others. At the same time, those seeking change must be cognizant of their institution's entelechy. Entelechy, from the Greek *enteles*, means complete or full, which in turn derives from *telos*, or goal. According to Engell (2001), an entelechy "demands we envision how to fulfill the potential of the whole by coordinating and giving proper weight to a set of varied goals and the goods they seek to achieve" (p. 44). For each university, this process entails a particular inflection or emphasis. As Gray puts it, "The single most serious problem of our universities is their failure to adhere steadily to their own purposes" (as cited in Axtell, 1998, pp. 213-24). Thus, the type of learning environment one creates depends on the college or university culture, the nature of faculty and staff in that culture, the demographics and preparation of students, and the creativity of planners who seek to fuse the interests and needs of those involved in the community with the learning mission espoused by the college or university.

Effective transformative change will not only help to coalesce and motivate all of the key agents on campus, but it will also improve the retention rates of students. Levitz, Noel, and Richter (1999) have noted that the "success of an institution and the success of its students are inseparable" (p. 31). Institutions that seriously commit to this credo and involve every person in this effort-from the president to the faculty to the support staff-are much more likely to reduce the dropout rate of their students; and because attrition rates are greatest in the first year of college, it is crucial that emphasis is placed on special affective and cognitive needs of entering college students. Indeed, as Dennis (1998) notes, "Research indicates that the first six weeks of the semester are the most critical for retaining first year students as they struggle to adapt to a new environment and academic challenges" (p. 81). To prevent students from experiencing those feelings of disappointment, failure, and confusion that lead a student to drop out of college, the holistic needs of the student must be addressed. Research indicates that attrition is determined not only by a student's relative intellectual ability but even more so by a number of key affective variables such as study habits, academic confidence, desire to finish college, attitude toward educators, self-reliance, and openness (Levitz, Noel, & Richter, 1999). Thus, one program or activity conducted by one office with a singular focus is not enough to meet this challenge. A comprehensive and coordinated effort that involves the entire campus is essential in addressing the complex and varied needs of incoming students and in ensuring a successful and completed undergraduate experience.

Although improving the first-year experience is an ambitious proposition, this type of substantial change in a university or college should not happen all at once-nor should it necessarily involve a one-time radical transformation in which all of the traditional programming and practices are discarded and new ones suddenly mandated. Not only should it be viewed by everyone involved as an ongoing and evolutionary process (which they can help to shape and reshape), but it should also be made manageable and feasible. Beginning by revising or piloting a few quality programs that really make a difference to first-year students and faculty is far preferable to instituting an array of mediocre programs or taking on one major initiative in which most key stakeholders do not feel invested. Indeed, incremental and successful steps can sometimes help

"Effective transformative change will not only help to coalesce and motivate all of the key agents on campus, but it will also improve the retention rates of students."

a group shift its thinking and thereby make possible a more radical transformation in the future. As faculty, staff, and students witness successful small changes, they may be more willing to take responsibility for larger ones. Key to enabling this shift is creating a system of open and regular communication. Because a university consists of many units with very different ways of perceiving the world and often little interaction with one another, it is imperative that before and during a change, all of those involved are kept abreast of developments, given frequent opportunities to offer feedback, and taken seriously when they do offer feedback.

A commitment to improving the first-year experience is significant not only for the faculty and staff who must rethink their own roles and relationships with others, but also for the students. As Gardner (2001) puts it, "The first year of college is one of life's most crucial and memorable transitions. The degree to which students achieve success navigating this watershed year exerts an enormous influence on their academic progress, career pursuits, and social endeavors" (p. 1). The following steps have been found to be logical and incremental points along the way toward achieving a shared commitment to enhancing the first-year experience. Although these steps are listed in a linear fashion, they may not always happen consecutively, and they should be modified to suit the needs of one's particular context.

Create an Integrated Academic and Student Affairs Committee

Because the university is often fragmented into different divisions and departments, it is important to pursue active collaboration with various parts of the institution from the very beginning of the change process. One way to do this is to create a comprehensive task force or committee, with representation from those units with the largest stake in the first-year experience. Some key stakeholders whose concerns are most directly influenced by first-year students and who have the greatest influence on them include admission and recruitment staff, first-year instructional staff in core or liberal arts courses, residence hall or commuter center staff who deal primarily with first-year students, academic advising staff, representatives from student clubs and organizations who are eager to have new members, and administrators who will have to perfect support services and systems to accommodate any recommended changes resulting from the committee's work. In addition, alumni and community members can also be critical in forming a planning team. If representatives of these units are not available to serve on the actual committee, it is important that committee members seek out their input in other ways-through interviews, conversations, surveys, or an invitation to review preliminary drafts of the committee report. All those on the committee should understand that their roles are not only to represent the stakes of their constituents, but also to facilitate effective communication-that is, to take information back to their constituents, seek feedback on that information, refine it, and then return to the committee with those newly refined ideas. A spirit of inclusive and open collaboration is crucial to effecting change.

In order to model this spirit of collaboration, it may also be advisable for the committee to have co-chairs, one from student affairs and the other from academic affairs. The co-chairs must model this open exchange of ideas, worldviews, and respect and demonstrate a willingness to synthesize perspectives. Coming from separate divisions, the authors of this chapter found the experience of co-chairing a first-year-experience committee to be an eye-opening and critical means to creating systemic change. Both academic and student affairs staff tend to perceive the world in different ways. Their vocabularies, assumptions about learning, and priorities can also vary, and each division tends to harbor hidden prejudices, fears, and stereotypes about the other. For example, academic affairs staff often believe that student affairs staff sometimes distract students from serious intellectual and academic inquiry and coddle them, thereby feeding into students' narcissistic proclivities. Conversely, student affairs personnel often express frustration at faculty, who they feel focus exclusively on cognitive development to the

neglect of more holistic concerns, such as interpersonal, intrapersonal, physical, and spiritual development. The co-chairs can ensure that all of the committee members gain a better understanding of and empathy for the positions of those from divisions different from their own, thereby paving the way for a more open system of communication and a true integration of ideas and perspectives. Moreover, they can help committee members overcome the harmful "zero-sum-gain" mindset (the idea that if I compromise on one issue, I am necessarily losing power, control, and resources). If the co-chairs are willing to look critically at their own units and division, to listen carefully to the perspective of their fellow chair, and to make changes in the way they perceive the world and function in it, then they set a powerful tone of collaboration for others on the committee and across the university to follow.

Review Professional Literature

Like the co-chairs, each of the committee members should pursue their work as collaborative members of a learning team. All should be learners, conceptualizers, and gatherers of critical information. To start the process of inquiry, the committee should explore, research, and generate theoretical concepts that underlie how the college or university perceives learning. As this process of discovery unfolds, the committee should formulate a set of founding assumptions about first-year students and their learning. If there are faculty members or staff on the campus who pursue the study of student development or teaching pedagogy, they should be included as members or consultants to the planning committee. Consulting these experts not only demonstrates respect for their work but also allows easy and quick access to information that would otherwise have to be gleaned from publications or consultations with experts elsewhere.

Although there are many definitions and theories about learning, one that appeals to many in both academic and student affairs capacities is the "Powerful Partnerships" model (1998), compiled through the collaboration of American Association for Higher Education, American College Personnel Association, and National Association of Student Personnel Administrators. This model includes a set of principles designed to stimulate high-quality learning. These principles hold that learning is fundamentally about making and maintaining connections between in-class and out-of-class experiences as well as among students and faculty. Students' learning can be enhanced when they are actively involved in the search for meaning, receive continual constructive feedback and engage in self-reflection, are encouraged to integrate new information with old, and are immersed in a challenging learning environment. "Powerful Partnerships" offers an idealized view of learning as a collaborative, contextual, developmental, and cumulative process. Underlying this definition of learning is the assumption that learning can happen in any context and is made more profound if connections are made throughout these different contexts.

Reinforcing the notion of learning as fundamentally collaborative is important not only because it can help to unify faculty, staff, students, and even alumni in their striving for deeper learning in all experiences, but also because it works against the traditional academic emphasis on competition in intellectual inquiry. Whether one uses or revises the "Powerful Partnerships" model or another of the many excellent models that exist, what is important is to identify or develop a compelling model for enhancement, one that is derived from the unique understanding of learning in the specific campus environment and that can be used to stimulate the creative thinking of the planning team. Such a model will help committee members decide what to include in the first-year experience and how to modify existing components of the first-year program.

Conduct an Internal Analysis

Every campus has a first-year program. At some campuses, it is implicit rather than explicit. The first-year planning committee should seek to expose the implicit first-year courses, activities, and other components already in existence

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so that they can deliberate on whether the implicit assumptions and practices of this existing program are defensible in the context of research and theory. Conducting an inventory and creating a list of existing components of your first-year program—beginning with the initial recruitment and marketing efforts of your university and ending with the transition into the sophomore college year—can be an excellent early step in the process. Committee members can deepen their awareness and understanding of these existing activities and practices as well as their strengths and current obstacles through interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, and other research methods. In addition, specific and critical analyses should be performed (or recent studies used) to discover how students on the campus think and relate to others as well as how they perceive themselves and their role in learning.

The analysis of how students see learning and how they interact with others may lead to new insights about what is required to foster productive learning. Student development theory clearly indicates that students' affective development heavily influences their ability to pursue rigorous intellectual learning. As Baxter Magolda (1999) has found in her longitudinal study of adult learners, learning is a slowly evolving and developmental process. To achieve "self-authorship" (the ability to define one's own views rather than to blindly accept others'), one must gain "simultaneously an ability to construct knowledge in a contextual world, an ability to construct an internal identity separate from external influences, and an ability to engage in relationships without losing one's internal identity" (p. 12). In other words, cognition is necessarily intertwined with the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of learning. Thus, to pay attention to affective or social development is not to "dumb down" the intellectual experience, it is simply to acknowledge that, without giving attention to natural developmental transitions, students will not be freed for productive and purposeful learning.

Beyond understanding the way students learn on your campus, it is important to think about students' attitudes toward academic study and effort. In a recent study that focused on student expectations about learning at several Midwest universities, Schilling and Schilling (1999) discovered that "most incoming students report expecting to spend thirty or forty hours a week in academic pursuits, including attending classes" (p. 4). In other words, they expect to spend about an hour a day outside of class for every hour in class. Faculty, however, expect students to spend two to three times that much. Even more surprisingly, by the spring semester of the first year, most students were devoting much less time (20 or fewer hours a week) on academic study than the amount that they had originally set for themselves, thereby widening the gap between faculty and student expectations for student effort even further.

These findings underscore the importance of balance between first-year students' curricular and co-curricular lives. Students need help deciding how to spend their time, energy, and their intellectual and interpersonal resources. The relationship among these various choices is especially important; students need to have a model for how their choices will influence their learning and eventual career and personal experiences. As Arminio and Loflin have shown in Chapter 3, purposeful involvement in co-curricular activities and organizations can help to deepen student learning, advance student intellectual development, and ensure their completion of college. Similarly, King and Wooten point out in Chapter 4 that students who are part of a campus community and take part in campus activities (such as orientation, residence hall events, and campus celebrations) are more satisfied with college and tend to persist to graduation. Finally, Kuh, Palmer, and Kish in Chapter 1 provide evidence that students engaged in purposeful out-of-class experiences reap tangible educational rewards.

The greater threat to academic excellence and devotion than over-involvement in co-curricular activities is an over-indulgence in certain types of social experiences. The problems of alcohol and other drug abuse are legendary and intractable in many collegiate settings; this problem and West Virginia University's creative response, which involved the collaboration of stu-

dent and academic affairs, is described by Gray, Lang, and Collins in Chapter 7. Although higher education administrators are not responsible for the choices students make about social life after class hours and off the geographic boundaries of the campus, it is clear that the choices many students make have a negative impact on their learning. To begin addressing this, a comprehensive plan to enhance first-year students' engagement must take into account such things as peer influence, students' perceptions (or misperceptions) of what is expected related to drinking and other forms of socializing, and what qualifies as acceptable entertainment on weeknights and late-night on weekends.

In addition to helping students set realistic expectations about academic learning and effort, it is also important to help faculty and student affairs staff redefine and better communicate their own expectations about learning to students and to understand the changing nature of students in today's higher education institutions. In Chapter 2, Schroeder explains the changes among students that impact the campus and those who serve them. Faculty and staff will be more effective in achieving their goals if they are well informed about these dynamics. Unlike many faculty and staff members who went to college to identify a philosophy of life, felt alienated from traditional authorities and establishments, and developed an ironic cynicism on life, today's students are "incredibly industrious. They like to study and socialize in groups. They create and join organizations with great enthusiasm.... They feel no compelling need to rebel. Not even a hint of one. They not only defer to authority; they admire it. 'Alienation' is a word one almost never hears from them. They regard the universe as beneficent, orderly and meaningful" (Brooks, 2001, p. 54). Moreover, they have grown up influenced by MTV more than by J. D. Salinger. Thus, they respond well to visual and audio stimulation and a quicker pace of communication. They also are much more candid in communication and are more comfortable with overt sexuality and the exploration of difference than previous generations of students. If faculty do not know that MTV influences many students' worldviews, opportunities to connect are lost.

The changing demographics and attitudes of students dictate that new pedagogies be explored in teaching. Service- and problem-based learning, collaborative learning, interdisciplinary teaching, and technology-enhanced learning (see Chapter 5 for exciting ideas on distance learning) are all possible ways of connecting to this more industrious, social, and pragmatic generation of first-year college students. What makes these innovative pedagogies particularly promising is that they typically address the cognitive and affective developmental needs of students and they encourage faculty and students to collaborate with others around them, including faculty from other departments, members of the community, as well as student affairs staff. Learning done in any classroom setting can be deepened and made more relevant to students' lives if out-of-class experiences (e.g., study groups in the residence halls, service experiences, field trips) that connect to the in-class learning are created.

Benchmark with Other Institutions

Studying the existing practices, attitudes, assumptions, and patterns of the current students, staff, and faculty of one's own institution is critical to developing an effective first-year program. Yet, in addition to conducting this type of internal reflection and analysis, it is important to look outward at what other similar and successful institutions have done to enhance the first-year experience. One way to do this is through benchmarking, the process of identifying, learning, adapting, and implementing outstanding practices and processes from outside organizations in order to help an organization improve its performance. For some, however, benchmarking means figuring out "How we compare in the pecking-order of comparable institutions." Whereas that type of

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benchmarking may be useful for evaluative purposes, a first-year planning committee needs to focus on exploring peer and aspirational institutions with strong first-year programs, rather than other measures of status. Thus, it is advisable to search broadly for institutions with innovative and effective practices in this area and then to involve key stakeholders on campus to help adapt these practices to their own context.

Where at all possible, committee members should be funded to visit other campuses to be able to benchmark. Literature survey, web analysis, and telephone conferences prove useful when it comes to making the important decisions of how to enhance first-year student learning, but nothing compares to a face-to-face interaction with others who have already trod the same path. If conducted with the right spirit, benchmarking can be an eye-opening experience and a means of overcoming resistance to change. Inviting a skeptic to visit another university that has implemented a successful first-year program can help create better "buy-in" and thus speed along the process of organizational change. Moreover, by venturing outside one's own sector, fresh, breakthrough ideas as well as an appreciation for what one's own institution does well are obtained.

Create a Provisional Model

Once all of the information has been collected from the review of professional literature, the internal analysis, and the external benchmarking process, the committee can turn its attention to creating a model for the first-year experience that builds on the best internal and external practices and that is uniquely suited to the local campus culture. As the committee develops the model, these questions should be considered:

- Does each component of the first-year program (e.g., course, activity, program, or opportunity) currently offered or planned promote the definition of learning to which the committee has agreed?
- Are the developmental needs of first-year students being recognized and accommodated?
- Can existing efforts be modified in ways to complement the emerging notions of what the ideal learning environment would entail? If possibilities exist, how can those who are responsible for these existing components join in the refinement and change effort?
- Are there programs that can or should be eliminated?
- Do the proposed new initiatives respond to the critical issues identified in the external and internal research phases?
- Are there adequate resources to support the recommended changes? If resources exist, are there enough so that each of the initiatives can become exemplary marks of quality? If not, how might you secure the resources?
- Can other proposals, for which there are no resources, be "sold" to those who will have to change or will have to provide resources in order for the first-year initiatives to be successful?
- Is there enough "buy-in" from key stake holders (e.g., faculty, upper-class students, staff, administration)? If not, how can this support be ensured?

These questions and areas of concern are not static and finite. In fact, as planning proceeds, new issues will emerge and take prominence above others. The critical factor is that the co-chairs and the rest of the committee must see potential obstacles as opportunities to forge new relationships and innovations.

Ensure Continuous Improvement Through Assessment

In Chapter 8, Siegel points out that one powerful way to leverage change and improvement in any program is through assessment. Assessment, according to Siegel, entails a series of beneficial steps that include defining the purpose and goals of a program, identifying concerns or problems associated with that program, gathering data and information that address those concerns or questions, sharing findings, and using findings to create improvement. Thus,

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it is imperative that as the committee is developing or revising a first-year program, they simultaneously generate a clear means of assessing the effectiveness of the new comprehensive plan as well as the individual program initiatives to enhance first-year students' experiences.

Assessment should be formulated to determine whether there is both an individual impact on students as well as a systemic or environmental change that complements the vision of the planning team. Key stakeholders from student and academic affairs should be involved in conceptualizing and collecting the assessment and evaluation information. The stakeholders must be able to be critical and analytical of themselves while at the same time offering insight and assistance to colleagues elsewhere in the institution who are striving to achieve the purposes of the plan.

Disseminate and Incorporate New and Revised Ideas

Throughout the planning process, the committee should share the emerging model with all of the stakeholders interviewed or surveyed. The committee members must become "charismatic listeners" who absorb feedback from others so carefully that, even if the advocated change is not adopted (or the advocated status quo is not maintained), it is undeniable that the feedback was heard. Where at all possible, revise the emerging document on a regular basis and share drafts with key change agents for additional feedback. In fact, it is best if the committee views the plan as a living document until all those involved have signed on to its tenets.

When criticisms emerge—even harsh criticisms—it is important to remember that any change that is significant is going to meet with resistance. Because change often entails rethinking one's habits, values and attitudes, it is necessarily going to meet with some resistance. Thus, not only is resistance something that one should not avoid, it should be met with empathy and interest. The opinions of the resisters will offer committee members valuable insights into the feasibility of the present proposed changes and possibly provide some ideas for how to improve the plan so that it can be implemented more successfully.

Seek Endorsement While Building Grassroots Support

Heifetz (2002) argues that what often stops institutional change from occurring is the failure on the part of leaders to make distinctions between technical challenges (those which ask us to apply current know-how and can be decided by authorities) and adaptive challenges (those which require us to learn new ways and which must be done by the people within the program). The model advanced in this chapter demands adaptive rather than technical leadership. Although adaptive leadership underscores the importance of "bottom-up" decision-making (that is, involving all of those key change-agents—students, faculty, and staff—in the process), it also does not ignore the formal hierarchy of the university. Even the highest officials of the university must be kept abreast of the deliberations of the first-year planning committee throughout the process. Once the committee agrees to a comprehensive plan, the endorsement of institutional positional leaders should be sought and their advocacy made public. Endorsement is primarily a way of reinforcing the good grassroots work that should have been done through the committee's analysis and planning.

Making it Work: Process to Action

This chapter has been as much about the process of stimulating change as it has been a model for the future trends of working with first-year students. The reason for this particular emphasis is our discovery that, while we sought to create change, our ability to exercise flexible and inclusive leadership was much more important than having prescribed models of the first-year experience. As noted earlier, the first-year model that each campus generates should necessarily vary. The following paragraphs describe the outcome of the work of the Miami University's First-Year Experience (FYE) Committee, a plan now in the process of implementation.

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The external and internal analyses yielded some fascinating findings. Miami already offers an impressive array of first-year initiatives—including a time-honored summer reading program, an expanding honors program, theme living-learning communities, residentially based courses and advising, as well as many successful leadership development and involvement opportunities in student organizations. Yet, some concern was raised that the many extracurricular and co-curricular opportunities offered to first-year students have distracted them from focusing sufficiently on academic learning. In addition, concerns were expressed that first-year courses were not as demanding or challenging as they could be.

After exploring the professional literature, the FYE Committee generated a unifying theme or model-entitled "Choice Matters"—which promotes an integrated vision of learning for first-year students at Miami. This theme advances intellectual challenge by supporting explicit and purposeful connections among parts of the curriculum and between the curriculum and other aspects of the collegiate experience. To achieve this vision, students must be challenged to deepen learning in all facets of their lives—in their courses as well as their other collegiate experiences. They must learn to make purposeful choices about which experiences they will pursue, choices that are in keeping with their educational goals and that simultaneously encourage them to grow in new ways.

The "Choice Matters" initiative is committed to helping entering students to do the following:

- Set high expectations about learning for themselves and others
- Make purposeful decisions and focused use of time and resources
- Take risks to promote learning in a diverse and complicated world
- Work with others to deepen their understanding of self
- Integrate and reflect critically on knowledge gained from diverse experiences.

Both student and academic affairs are launching several progressive elements to help students learn the importance of making good choices, taking purposeful risks, and working to achieve balance and connection in their learning experience. Some of the specific projects include

- *Promotional Materials and Information.* Entering students are greeted at orientation with a newsletter, speeches, skits, as well as written brochures that reinforce the importance of the "Choice Matters" initiative. Faculty members are also given a brochure on "Choice Matters" and suggestions for how they can reinforce these themes in the classroom. A web site on the FYE at Miami is being created.
- *"Learning Goals" Worksheet.* During the four days before class begins as well as the first week of classes, students will work with student leaders and resident assistants to complete a set of "provisional goals" using a "Learning Goals" worksheet. The worksheet will be used to demonstrate how to make discerning and purposeful choices about academic and co-curricular involvement. "Choice Matters" workshops in residence halls and with commuting students will reinforce the importance of the "Learning Goals" during the first few weeks of the semester. Student discussions will be stimulated by *Finding Forrester,* a film depicting a young male and his mentor struggling with issues of identify and choice. Viewing of the film is complemented by a web site including segment clips, an electronic discussion board, and other interactive elements.
- *Summer Reading Program Discussion.* All students meet with a faculty member to discuss the summer reading selection on the day before classes begin. During that discussion, faculty facilitators will emphasize the theme of choices in the book and ask students to reflect on their own choices.
- *Mega Fair.* A major involvement and service fair will bring all organizations open

to new student participation together for new students to see. All service, multicultural, Greek, and other clubs and organizations will be invited to participate. Students will be exposed simultaneously to the array of involvement opportunities at Miami. The groups and organizations participating in Mega Fair will be encouraged to present themselves as part of the holistic Miami experience and that each and every one of them has something to contribute to students' educational attainment. Students will be encouraged to prepare by targeting specific types of involvement they wish to pursue. Students will be urged to select their involvements with academics as their first priority and with co-curricular involvement complementing classes in purposeful ways.

- *Developmental Advising in the Residence Hall.* First-Year Advisors (professional staff advisors in the residence halls and commuter center) will integrate the "Learning Goals" worksheet in advising appointments. Students will be helped to understand how to make their own independent decisions, free of excessive or unthinking peer influence. They will also be helped to learn to "let go" of ideas that can undermine good decision making and appropriate balance while at Miami. Of particular importance are reducing the sense of competition and undue pressure to perform, understanding that making decisions is a natural part of one's existence, and realizing that mistakes are not irreparable and new courses of action can be taken. Students will be encouraged to make careful involvement decisions during the "red zone" of the first few weeks of college. Upperclass students will be encouraged to be conscientious role models, and all will be encouraged to accept the mutual accountability so critical to establishing a healthy learning environment.
- *Student Organization Intervention.* Student organizations will be encouraged to increase their focus and purpose in campus event and activity scheduling. They will be particularly encouraged to promote balance, focus, and reflection in students' experiences. The staff advisors working with these organizations will urge appropriate scheduling of events, event posting on the University calendar, fewer sponsored events, and greater collaboration with other organizations, thereby enhancing the quality and reducing the costs of these co-curricular events.

The above strategies were created by an energetic, imaginative, and risk-taking group committed to a compelling and common goal—enhancing Miami students' first-year experience. The initiatives to which they committed the University were the outcome of thoughtful homework assignments, charismatic listening, coalition building, and respect accorded to all those who could possibly contribute. This example stands as testament to the fact that the process principles provided for your use can, indeed, achieve lasting and deep change. This is not a cookbook approach, but one that requires any institution serious about change to commit to comprehensive and systemic change. Finally, and perhaps most important, the process and the product helped the creators of this first-year initiative to grow in their respect for each other and in their commitment to collaborative work in the future.

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Mary L. Collins is special assistant to the vice president for student affairs at West Virginia University, where her responsibilities include communications, development, student government, and the creation and implementation of innovative programs and services. As a representative of WVU, she has made several professional presentations nationally and has published articles in higher education journals and magazines. Her efforts have been recognized with membership in the Leadership Monongalia Class of 2002-03, with the Richard T. Feller Outstanding Alumni Award for Distinguished Service to Students in 2001, and with the Outstanding New Professional Award, presented by the West Virginia Association of Student Personnel Administrators in 1999. She is a member of National Association of Student Personnel Administrators and West Virginia Association of Student Personnel Administrators, and serves as chair or member of several WVU committees and organizations. Prior to her work at WVU, Collins was a freelance writer whose work was featured in several national Catholic publications. She

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